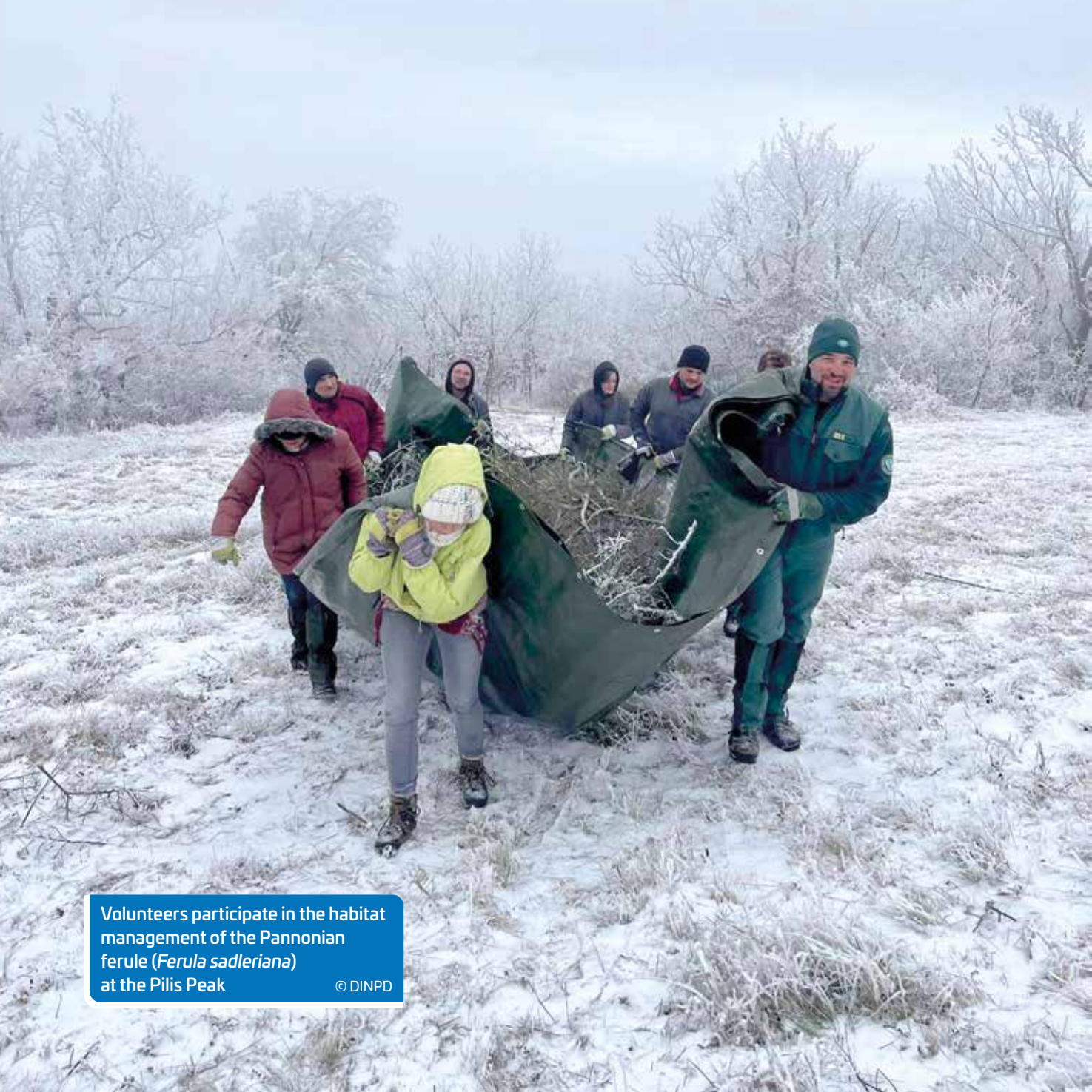


PILIS BIOSPHERE RESERVE



Volunteers participate in the habitat management of the Pannonian ferule (*Ferula sadleriana*) at the Pilis Peak © DINPD

ALLIANCE FOR THE PILIS BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Pilis-Visegrád Mountains were awarded the title of biosphere reserve by UNESCO in 1981. That is when the Pilis Biosphere Reserve (Pilis BR) was established. Its current area was granted and announced in September 2025, at the 5th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves. Although the biodiversity characteristic of the region is certainly one of the most outstanding in Hungary, the challenges of the Pilis BR are also enormous. These include the expansion of the Budapest agglomeration, mass tourism, and the effects of climate change, such as the dehydration of habitats or the spread of invasive species.

PBR |  One of the most important goals of our publication

is to demonstrate that the conservation of the natural values of the Pilis BR is only possible through the cooperation of local stakeholders. The activities presented here are implemented through the dialogue and joint work between the Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate (DINPD), Pilis Park Forestry Company (Pilis Park Forestry), 21 regional municipalities, local farmers and nature conservation NGOs. The organizational structure of the Pilis BR also reflects this collaboration. On the International Day of the Biosphere Reserves, there is an annually held Forum for the Pilis Biosphere, where all the regional stakeholders are invited. The Advisory Board of the Pilis BR is elected at this Forum, where the representatives of the MAB National Committee, DINPD, Pilis Park Forestry, local municipalities, NGOs and farmers are also present.

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MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE PROGRAMME

*By decision of the
International Co-ordinating Council
of the Programme on Man and the Biosphere,*

Pilis (extension) Hungary

*has been designated for inclusion
in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.*

*The world's major ecosystem types and landscapes
are represented in this Network, which is devoted to conserving
biological diversity, promoting research and monitoring,
as well as seeking to provide models of sustainable
development in the service of humankind.*

*Participation in the World Network facilitates cooperation
and exchanges at the regional and international levels.*

DATE OF DESIGNATION

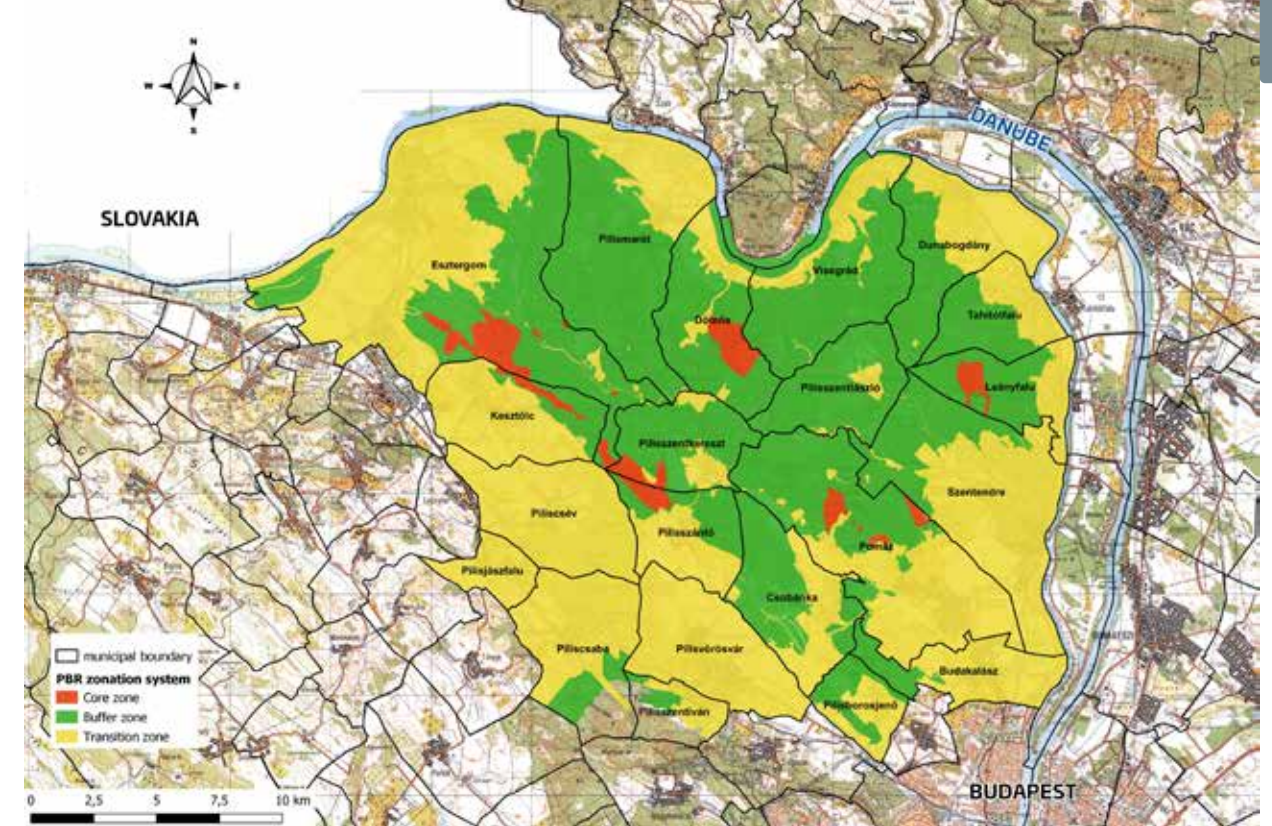
27 September 2025

DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO

Andrey Azoulay

The expansion of the Pilis BR was accepted by UNESCO in 2025. With this decision, the number of cooperating local municipalities increased to 21

PBR |



THE AREA OF THE PILIS BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Pilis Biosphere Reserve includes three zones:

The **core areas'** main aspects are nature conservation and research into natural values. These are strictly protected natural areas where human activity is permitted only for nature conservation purposes.

The **buffer zones** surround the core areas and are intended to protect them. In buffer zones, farming and tourism activities can be carried out in accordance with the objectives of the biosphere reserve.

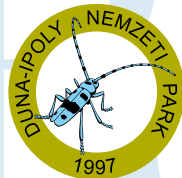
The **transitional zones** aim to support ecologically sustainable farming, tourism and other human activities in settlements. Their main purpose is to establish dialogue and cooperation between local municipalities, farmers, nature conservation managers, NGOs, educational institutions and private individuals, to develop joint programs, and to promote ecologically sustainable farming methods.

DUNA-IPOLY NATIONAL PARK DIRECTORATE (DINPD)

The Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate is primarily responsible for the conservation of the natural values of the Pilis BR. In addition to the work of national park rangers, this also means the nature conservation management of forests and grasslands. The biosphere reserve includes the following nature conservation areas:

- the southern part of the Duna-Ipoly National Park;
- a part of the Tádi and Süttő Danube Islands Nature Conservation Area part of the Buda Landscape Protection Area;
- 76 protected natural areas of local (municipal) importance;
- parts of Natura 2000 sites (Pilis and Visegrád Mountains, Danube and Floodplain Special Area of Conservation, Visegrád Mountains Special Protection Area)

There are about 450 caves in the Pilis BR, which provide significant bat habitats. There are various habitats from the floodplain forests of the Danube to the grasslands and forests formed on the sedimentary rocks of the Pilis and the volcanic rocks of the Visegrád Mountains. These habitats provide the survival of strictly protected species such as the Violet click beetle (*Limoniscus violaceus*), the Steppe moth (*Paracossulus thrips*), the Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) and the Short-toed snake eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*). Half of the world population of the Pannonian ferule (*Ferula sadleriana*) occurs here, and the Mountain pennycress (*Thlaspi montanum*) is only found here in Hungary.



DINPD's livestock farm in Esztergom plays an important role in the management of dry grasslands and in the preservation of native Hungarian sheep breeds – the cikta and the cigája
© Eszter Somló

PILIS PARK FORESTRY COMPANY

The forested mountainous region of the Pilis BR is a model area of permanent forest management in Hungary. Pilis Park Forestry, which manages the forests, is deliberately taking a pioneering role in implementing continuous forest cover across an increasingly large area of forest.

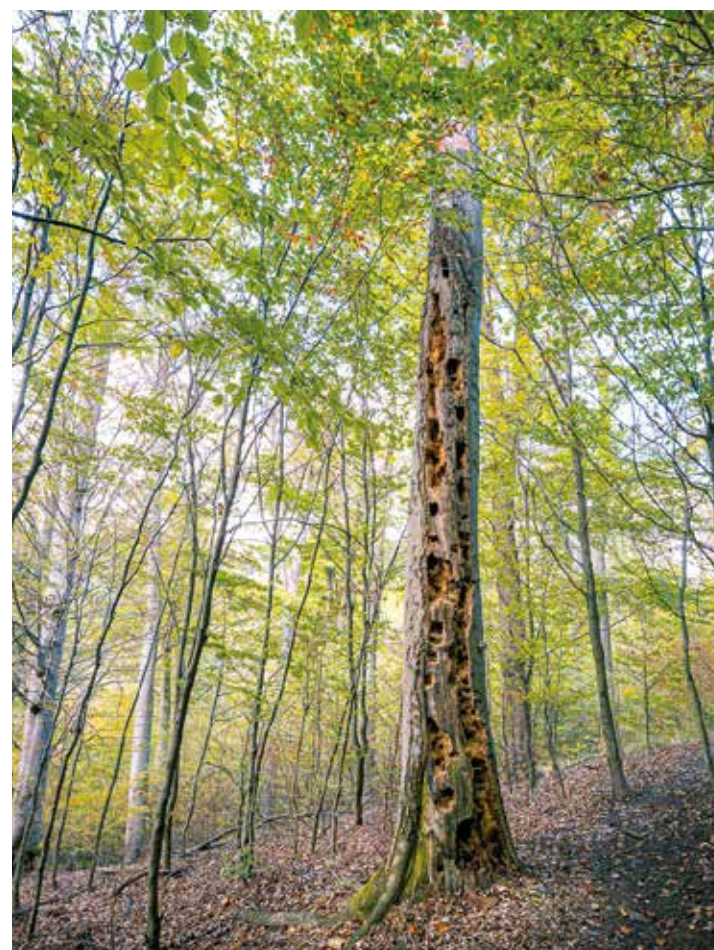


What does permanent forest management mean?

Through continuous-cover forest management, forests can simultaneously fulfill their conservation, public welfare, and economic functions, as this form of management most closely resembles natural forest ecosystems. It requires careful planning: every seven years, foresters monitor tree species, age classes, wildlife pressure, and the amount of deadwood in designated sample plots. Selection harvesting is carried out with a focus on seed trees with good genetic characteristics, high vitality, and desirable form. These 'superior trees' are selected in advance by the forester.

What characterizes a permanent forest?

- It continuously ensures the forest climate, as there are no clear-cut areas. This is particularly important in times of climate change!
- Trees of all ages can be found at the same time, from young saplings to tree Methuselachs.
- It consists of a wide variety of tree and shrub species. In the sessile oak forests, European hornbeam, wild cherry, various types of ash, maple, elm and rowan trees, under which dogwoods, hawthorns, spindles, privets and buckthorn form the shrub layer.
- Standing and fallen deadwood play an important role by providing habitats for woodpeckers, bats, beetles, mosses and ferns.
- Moreover, it enables the production of high-quality timber.



© Pilis Park Forestry

PILISSZENTLÁSZLÓ



It lies in a quiet valley of the Visegrád Mountains, named after Saint László I. One of the first monasteries of the Pauline order was built here nearly 700 years ago, and today the Church of King Saint László stands on its site. In 1686, the Pauline Order brought planters to the area from the area of Slovakia (Felvidék), and the majority of the inhabitants still speak Slovak today.

The Pilis Pauline Road passes through here, which was established in 2020 in connection with the 750th anniversary of the death of Blessed Özséb. During the 27 km circular tour, you can listen to thoughts that help you focus inward at several points.

The Spartacus Trail was created by hunters in the 1930s for their own purposes and was kept secret from hikers for a long time. Today, it is one of the most popular marked hiking trails, offering spectacular viewpoints. Although it runs along steep slopes, it follows the contour lines, making it relatively easy to walk. In many sections, the trail is only wide enough for one person, making it both exciting and challenging. © Katalin Cséfalvay



ADVISORY BOARD OF THE PILIS BIOSPHERE RESERVE



The 2026 meeting of the Pilis BR Advisory Board in Pilisszentlászló

The Advisory Board is the decision-making body of the Pilis BR, which has six members.

Permanent members:

- The representative of the MAB National Committee;
- The representative of the Pilis Park Forestry;
- The representative of the Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate.

Annually elected members:

- A mayor of a regional settlement;
- A representative of a regional nature conservation NGO;
- A private farmer from the regional.

Tasks of the Advisory Board:

- Proposing issues related to the Pilis Biosphere Reserve to decision-makers;
- Maintaining contact with the MAB National Committee and the UNESCO MAB Secretariat;
- Delegating members to EUROMAB meetings;
- Participating in the annual meetings of the MAB National Committee and reporting on the operation of the PBR;
- Convening the Forum meetings annually.

PILISCSABA

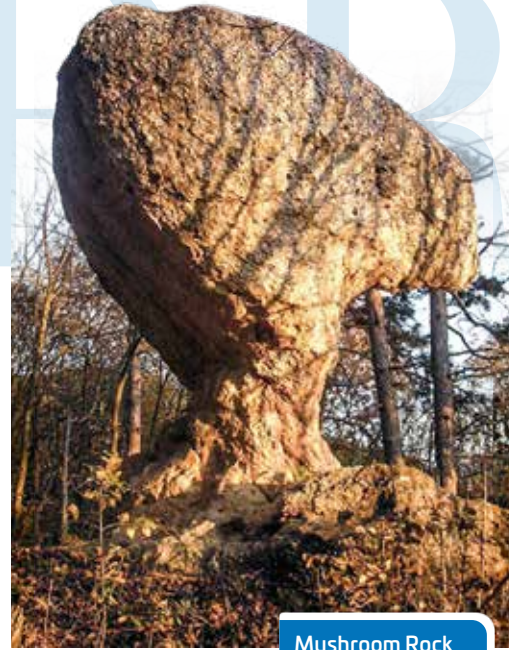


Piliscsaba was most likely named after the 10th-century chief Csaba, the leader of the Jenő tribe. Piliscsaba was the center of the manor of Palatine József. After that, the village was owned by his son, Archduke Károly József, who parceled out villa plots next to the Esztergom-Budapest railway line, built in 1895, creating a holiday resort named after his wife, Klotild. The charming streets of today's Klotild Grove are lined with protected rows of black pine, horse-chestnut, plane, and oak trees, many of which are over 100 years old.

Rows of black pine trees in Klotild Grove



© Ramón Wesselovszky



Mushroom Rock

© Ramón Wesselovszky

If we study the material of the Gomba Rock (Mushroom Rock) more closely, we can see that it was cemented together from debris of various sizes, shapes, and materials (e.g., marls, dolomite, limestone). The less strongly cemented grains in the lower, narrower part were more vulnerable to the erosive effects of water, wind, and ice than those in the upper part, resulting in the formation of its distinctive mushroom shape. Following the construction of the Piliscsaba-Százhalombatta gas pipeline, MOL, at the initiative of local civil organizations, created a 3,5 kilometer hiking trail and a viewing terrace to help protect the rock.

TRILATERAL AGREEMENTS

The 21 settlements of the Pilis Biosphere Reserve are connected by the natural environment of the Pilis and Visegrád Mountains, although they may face different challenges. In order to more effectively preserve natural values and to strengthen environmental education, we are preparing “tailor-made” trilateral agreements for each settlement. Under these agreements the local governments, Pilis Park Forestry and DINPD make voluntary commitments. One example is the agreement concluded with Piliscsaba in 2024, which includes, among other things:

- DINPD provides preferential programs for local students;
- Pilis Park Forestry and Piliscsaba Municipality provide financial support for environmental education work in the area;
- Pilis Park Forestry carries out habitat restoration by gradually reducing black pine;
- DINPD carries out a Tree-of-heaven replacement program together with the Municipality;
- National park rangers, district foresters and public area supervisors cooperate to protect natural values.



In 2024, an agreement was signed between the Municipality of Piliscsaba, DINPD, and Pilis Park Forestry



Pilis Biosphere Reserve sign in Pilisborosjenő

PILISJÁSZFALU PILISVÖRÖSVÁR



King Béla IV settled the Jász people on the royal estate in Pilis County after the Mongol (tatar) invasion. Due to the Turkish devastation, the population migrated to the area of today's Jászság. The Jász Memorial Stone has been standing on the outskirts of Pilisjászfalu since 1995. The cave hidden among the Dachstein limestone cliffs on the steep and rocky eastern side of Nagy-Somlyó-mountain is a habitat for bats.

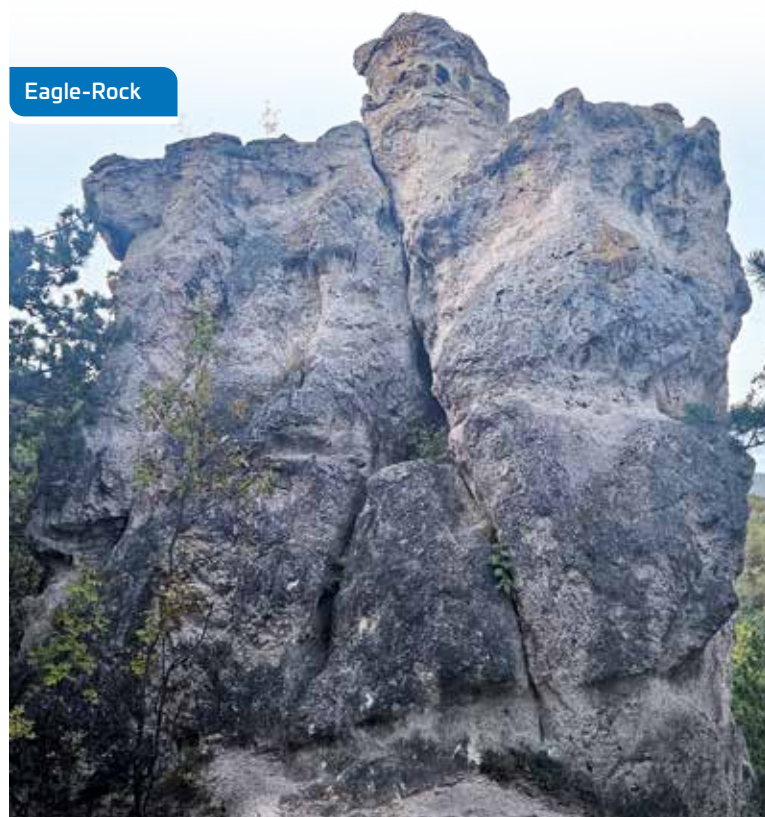


Lesser horseshoe bat
(*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

© Sarolta Borzsák



In terms of population, one of the largest German minorities in Hungary currently lives here. After the expulsion of the Turks from Hungary, the first Swabian settlers arrived from the Black Forest. Initially, their main occupation was farming, but later, many craftsmen also settled here. Fruit growing, handicrafts, and trade contributed to the development of the town's economy. The dolomite barrens between Pilisvörösvár and Piliscsaba were afforested with black pine. The road runs between the pine trees and interesting rock formations, including Sas Rock (Eagle Rock). It was given its name because its shape resembles a bird of prey with outstretched wings.



Eagle-Rock

© Ramón Wesselovszky

NGOs AND VOLUNTEERS

Several nature conservation NGOs are working to preserve the natural values of the Pilis BR. In Csobánka, the Japánkeserűfű Akciócsoport (Japanese Knotweed Action Group), and in Szentendre, the Zöldendre Association, organize volunteer activities to clean up the Dera Stream.

DINPD has announced civilian ranger training courses and exams in several settlements for those who wish to support the work of professional national park rangers as volunteers. Civilian rangers participate in conservation activities, guard falcon nests, serve as volunteer guides, organize programs for children, and help identify natural values.



Civilian ranger training course...



Volunteer nature conservation work along the Dera Stream



...and exam

© Japánkeserűfű Akciócsoport

COOPERATION

KESZTÖLC



According to tradition, after the Tartar invasion, the rock caves of the Csévi Cliffs were home to the hermit Blessed Özséb, the founder of the Pauline monastic order. Their first monastery was built around 1250, and its remains can still be seen at Klastrompuszta (Monastery Ruins).

A special reminder of the village's past is the steep Postás-út (Postman's Trail). Until the 1960s, letters sent to Pilisszentlélek had to be addressed "last post office: Kesztlőc." From there, the local postman carried the mail on foot over the mountain to the village six days a week.

© Ede Somorjai



Wine cellars of Kesztlőc



The ruins of the monastery at Klastrompuszta

© Katalin Cséfalvay

The settlement is part of the Ászár-Neszmélyi wine region, and local families in Kesztlőc still produce wine in more than seventy cellars. A hiking trail leads past nearly 300 wine press houses to Kétágú Mountain, from where there is a beautiful view of the Dorog Basin. The landscape and local identity have also been strongly shaped by nearly two centuries of coal mining and quarrying. Near Kesztlőc, on Lencse Mountain, the region's largest and last operating coal mine was located, employing up to 1,200 people at its peak. The village has a mining monument and a Miner's Heritage Exhibition.

NATIONAL PARK RANGER SERVICE



The protection of natural values is the responsibility of park rangers, who can be recognized by their green uniforms, service ID cards, and badges. They are responsible for monitoring compliance with nature conservation regulations, preventing activities that could harm nature, and in-

itiating proceedings in the event of violations. They have the authority to inspect individuals who endanger or damage natural values, confiscate equipment used in such activities, and impose on-the-spot fines. Their tasks include surveying natural values, organizing guided tours, and carrying out habitat restoration projects.



POMÁZ



The city has been home to Hungarians, Serbs, Germans, and Slovaks living side by side for centuries, a heritage that is still clearly reflected in its traditions and built environment. Several historic churches, including Serbian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, preserve the religious and cultural traditions of these communities. One of its most notable landmarks is the Teleki–Wattay Castle, an important example of Baroque castle architecture and one of the symbols of the city.

In the Gazdák Forest (Farmers' Forest) in Pomáz, the Hubertus House, built in the 1920s, has hosted numerous community events. One of its founders was Dr. Lajos Tiszolczy, the village's legendary district physician, who sheltered a Polish-Jewish doctor and his wife there in 1944. After World War II, the building became a popular destination for young people seeking a more adventurous, nature-oriented accommodation, known as the Vilmos Janda hikers' lodge. In 2026, DINPD, in cooperation with the Pomáz Friends' Association (Pomáz Barátai Társaság), carried out a complete renovation of the building. It was reopened as Tiszolczy House, with the aim of once again serving as a venue for outdoor adventures and community programs, while preserving Pomáz's historical heritage.



© Gergő Horváth



© Eszter Linder

The strictly protected keeled plump bush-cricket or Hungarian tarsza (*Isophya costata*), a species of grasshopper endemic to the Carpathian Basin, inhabits the loess hills rising above Tófenék (Lake Bottom) in Pomáz and Szentendre

WATER RETENTION

The disappearance of wetlands and water-dependent species has become one of the greatest challenges for nature conservation. In addition to prolonged dry periods, another major problem is that rainwater cannot remain in the landscape. In forests, forest roads often drain water away, while in open grassland habitats, drainage ditches serve the same purpose.

With the support of an EU grant, DINPD has begun restoring small forest ponds at a total of 44 forest water habitats, as well as implementing measures to slow and retain water flow. By restoring water levels, these interventions create suitable breeding habitats for amphibians.

The green island between the ever-expanding settlements of Pomáz and Szentendre, Tófenék (Lake Bottom), was once part of the Danube floodplain. The marshland was drained through a network of canals. Volunteers from the Zöldendre Association in Szentendre and the Eco-Circle Pomáz (Pomázi Ökokör), with the support of the municipalities and professionals, helped construct water-retention weirs. Their aim is to prevent locally generated water from flowing away, allowing it to infiltrate the soil and evaporate into the air, thereby creating a more favorable microclimate during hot periods.



© Katalin Cséfalvay



© Eszter Linder





Continuous-cover forest near Pilismarót

© Réka Előd

PILISMARÓT



The village was once owned by the Pauline Order, which fled from the Turks to the Highlands (Felvidék) and later settled Hungarians and Slovaks from there in Marót. The villa of printer Gusztáv Heckenast was built around 1860 in Pilismarót. It housed a library, works by German, Italian, and Dutch artists, and a remarkable three-level landscape garden that welcomed many prominent guests. Prominent literary figures, such as Mihály Vörösmarty, Mór Jókai and József Bajza visited several times, and according to legend, Hungarian statesman Ferenc Deák drafted the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 here. Research into continuous-cover forest management began in the forests around Pilismarót. In 1999, Pilis Park Forestry first conducted experiments in Mexikópuszta, and later expanded them to the forests around Hoffman Lodge, which have since become the country's most important field training site. Today, this form of forest management, which maintains continuous forest cover, is successfully practiced across more than 6,000 hectares of forest.

© Nikola Rahmé

The rosalia longicorn (*Rosalia alpina*) is a characteristic resident of old beech forests and the emblematic animal of the DINPD



SMALL-SCALE CONSERVATION AREAS and HABITAT TREES IN THE FOREST

Pilis Park Forest practices continuous-cover forest management in most of the forests of the Pilis Biosphere Reserve. At the same time, even in these managed forests, smaller untouched patches (small-scale conservation areas) and trees rich in microhabitats ("habitat trees") are preserved. Together with the increasing amount of deadwood, these elements act as ecological stepping stones, helping to maintain the rich forest ecosystem.



© Péter Frank

The amount of standing and fallen deadwood in the area is surveyed, as approximately one-quarter to one-third of forest-dwelling organisms are associated with it in some way. The photograph shows a black woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*).



© Alexandra Gecsei

Approximately 16,000 habitat trees (biotope trees) have been designated. Cavities, dead branches, insect galleries, mosses, and fungi provide valuable microhabitats.



© Dorottya Izsa

The surroundings of small forest ponds, streams, and rock outcrops are left untouched as small-scale conservation areas. These areas account for approximately 5% of the forests under management.

DUNABOGDÁNY

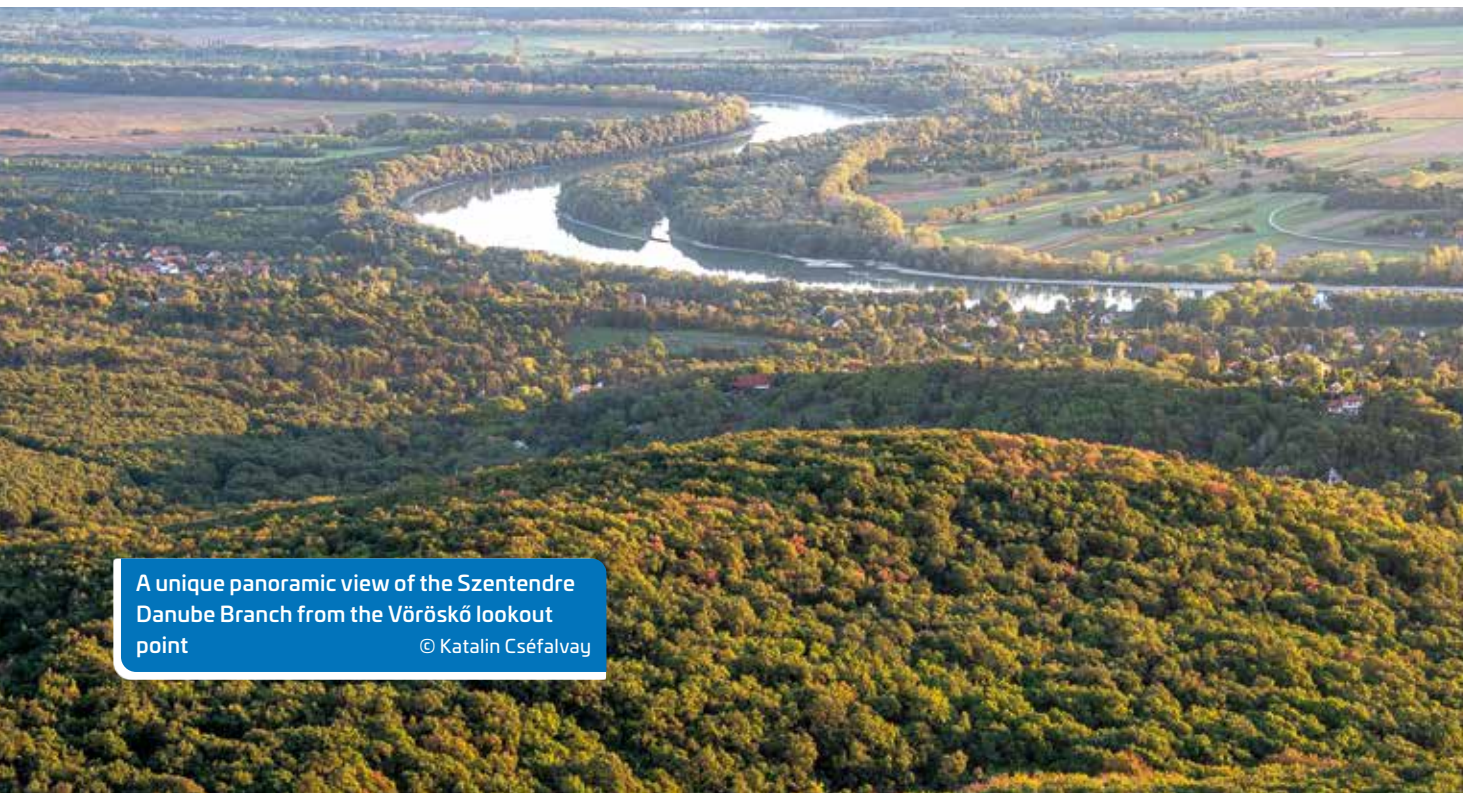


The village is located on the right bank of the Danube's Szentendre Branch, almost opposite the northern tip of Szentendre Island, at the foot of Csódi Hill (Csódi-hegy). Larger ships and barges do not operate on this branch of the Danube, and its sandy shoreline makes it an attractive natural beach for swimmers, kayakers, and canoeists. The dacite rock of Csódi Hill was already used in the 19th century for paving roads and regulating the Danube during the development of Budapest. The quarry is still in operation today.

TAHI



The Tahi part of Tahitótfalu lies between the Visegrád Mountains and the Danube. It became a popular holiday destination for artists and residents of the capital, a legacy still reflected in its turn-of-the-century villas and rows of wine cellars dating back to the area's traditional viticulture. The Danube Bridge at Tahitótfalu is the only road connection between Szentendre Island and the mainland. The original permanent bridge, built in 1914, was destroyed during World War II, and the current bridge was completed in 1978.



A unique panoramic view of the Szentendre Danube Branch from the Vöröskő lookout point

© Katalin Cséfalvay



CONSERVATION OF THE EUROPEAN WHITE MAYFLY

Danube mayfly bloom

© Imre Potyó

It is a magical experience to observe the mass swarming of the European white mayfly (*Ephoron virgo*) on a summer evening. Since 2012, after several decades of absence, millions of mayflies have once again appeared on the Danube from late July onwards. After dark, the larvae swim to the surface, where winged adults measuring just a few centimeters emerge. They then take flight and mate. After a short time, the exhausted females fall back into the water, lay their eggs, and die. However, the mayflies' flight is far from undisturbed. The lights of bridges spanning the river, illuminated boats, and riverside buildings create

a complex ecological trap. The attraction of artificial lighting, combined with the optical similarity between asphalt and the water surface, disrupts their natural behavior. Near brightly lit bridges, mayflies form huge swarms and eventually lay their eggs on the asphalt, where they die. In April 2019, a world-first optical protection system was built on the Tildy Zoltán Bridge in Tahitótfalu to protect the European white mayfly. Blue-light reflectors mounted on the bridge pillars help keep the majority of the swarming mayflies above the river.

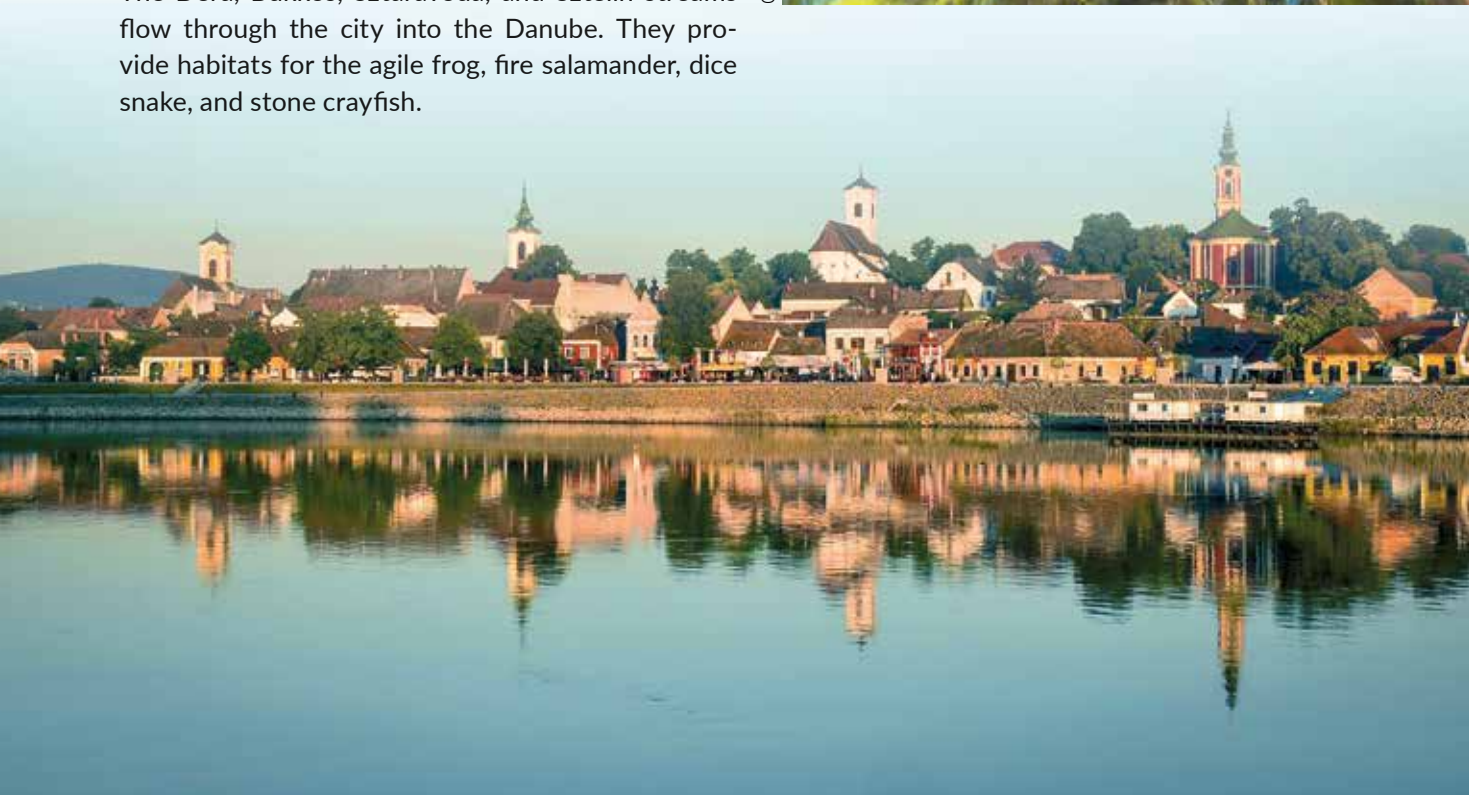
SZENTENDRE



The “City of Artists” can also rightly be called the city of “nationalities” or “waters.” Since the 1920s, the settlement has been an important center of the Hungarian avant-garde and modern fine arts. Since 1974, the Open-Air Ethnographic Museum has offered a fascinating insight into Hungarian folk architecture and traditional rural life. For centuries, various ethnic communities have lived peacefully alongside one another. Today, Bulgarian, Roma, Greek, Croatian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, and Slovak national self-governments operate here. The Dera, Bükkös, Sztaravoda, and Sztelin streams flow through the city into the Danube. They provide habitats for the agile frog, fire salamander, dice snake, and stone crayfish.

© Katalin Cséfalvay

The area around the Dömörkapu Waterfall is a habitat of the fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*)



AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION

Wetland-dependent amphibians and reptiles are among the direct victims of climate change, as the drying up of forest ponds and streams results in the loss of their breeding grounds. Their populations are also threatened when their spring migration routes cross a motorway. To protect them, we install temporary barrier fences with the help of volunteers at the end of February. The Pilis BR is home to significant populations of fire salamanders near Esztergom and Dömös. In both areas, the salamanders are threatened by roadkill when they venture onto paved roads during rainy weather. Their protection depends primarily on careful driving.

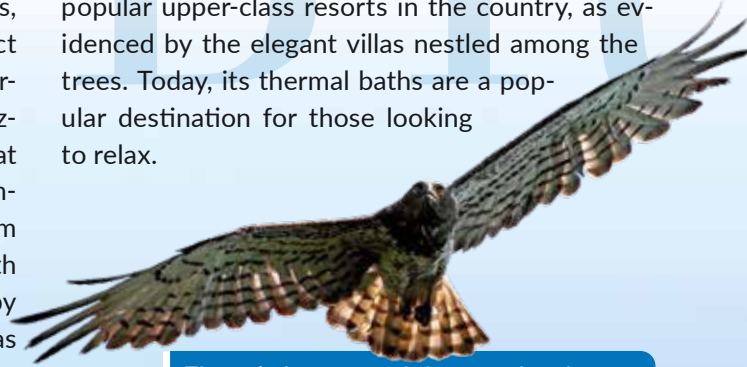


LEÁNYFALU



The history of Leányfalu dates back to Roman times, when the area was an important station on the Danube Limes. The ruins of the system of fortresses, ditches and walls that served to protect the Roman Empire can be found in Verőce, Esztergom, Visegrád, Dunabogdány, Leányfalu, and Esztergom in the Danube Bend. The watchtower that once stood here was built around 372-373. Presumably, 20-25 soldiers were stationed here, and from the top of the watchtower they kept in touch with the guard posts of the neighboring settlements by means of fire and smoke signals. The tower was abandoned in the first half of the 5th century.

Later, the area was famous for its grape cultivation and wine culture. The meeting of the Visegrád Mountains and the Danube inspired many writers, poets and artists who created or rested here. For a long time, it was considered one of the most popular upper-class resorts in the country, as evidenced by the elegant villas nestled among the trees. Today, its thermal baths are a popular destination for those looking to relax.



The strictly protected short-toed snake eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) nests in the forests above Leányfalu. Camera traps have also recorded the Wildcat. © Antal Klébert

WILDCAT CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) is strictly protected in Hungary, with a conservation value of 250,000 HUF, yet its population is decreasing. The main reason for this is the shrinking and fragmentation of habitats, as well as hybridization – breeding with domestic cats, which deteriorates the genetic purity of the species. In addition, significant sources of danger include diseases that are transmitted from domestic cats, and roadkill. Their hidden lifestyle, avoidance of people, and the difficulty of accurately identifying the species further complicate the conservation work. DINPD, Budakeszi Wildlife Park and Pilis Park Forestry launched a joint species conservation program in 2021. As part of this, camera traps were placed, and genetic surveys were carried out, which confirmed the presence of the species in the Pilis BR's area.

The Budakeszi Wildlife Park rescue center plays an important role in the program, and since 2021 it has participated in raising 6 genetically purebred orphaned wildcat kittens and preparing them for life in the wild. Out of 4 wildcats, 3 individuals were released back into the forest area with GPS collars, so that their path can be tracked in the Pilis BR area. The tracked individuals were genetically proven purebred wildcats.

© Adrián Novák



Camera trap records and genetic surveys proved that wildcats are the permanent residents of the forests in the Pilis BR

© Linda Surányi



Lukrécia received a GPS collar in August 2025

PILISBOROSJENŐ



The cultural and architectural heritage of Pilisborosjenő is based on centuries-old, primarily Swabian traditions. The historical core of the village, the Old Village, still preserves the traditional settlement structure today: the winding streets that adapt to the terrain and the porched, gabled farmhouses create a unique village image.

German ethnic events and traditional associations contribute to the preservation of the identity of the settlement. The memories of the local wine culture and grape cultivation are also defining elements of Pilisborosjenő's past. The image of the village is determined by the towering Nagy-Kevély Mountain (534 m). The Kevély Mountain Education Trail leads here, where we can see the lavender field, the Calvary, the dusty dolomite block of the Teve Szikla (Camel Rock) and the replica of the castle built for the filming of the film 'Stars of Eger'. The protection of the landscape is also helped by a trilateral agreement with DINPD and the Pilis Park Forestry, as part of which a 25-hectare permanent forest has been designated on the outskirts of the village. The objectives of the biosphere reserve are also actively supported by local environmental NGOs; the settlement aims for gentle tourism and the transition into inland have also been stopped.

© Bernadett Frivaldszky



SAVING THE MOUNTAIN PENNYCRESS

The Mountain pennycress (*Thlaspi montanum*) is one of the rarest and most endangered plants in Hungary. It grows in greater numbers in the higher regions of the Alps, but in Hungary its only known population occurs in Pilisborosjenő. According to botanists, it established itself in the area during the ice ages, and then, with the arrival of relief, it was forced back to the steep northern slopes with cooler microclimates. In the 1930s and 1940s, the area was reached by the karst-forestation program that was carried out as a comprehensive program in our country at that time. The Mountain pennycress's growing area was also planted with black pine, and the plant remained only in those rocky areas where the pine seedlings could not take root. This population, which has shrunk to less than a hundred individuals, is now primarily threatened not by the black pine, but by the increasing summer heat, severe drought periods, and even the rooting of wild boar.

To save the mountain pennycress, the Pilisborosjenő Municipality joined forces with DINPD and the Pilis Park Forestry. The municipality hired an expert to plan the necessary interventions. Subsequently, the remaining patches of the plant were fenced off, and the shrubs around them are being managed. In the near future, specimens propagated in the Budapest Botanical Garden will be replanted in the habitat.

© Antal Halász



Mountain pennycress

© Pál Kézdy



Site visit at the habitat of the Mountain pennycress

PILISSZÁNTÓ



The name Pilisszántó refers to the Pauline monks and monasteries that lived here in the Middle Ages. In the 13th century, Blessed Özséb gathered hermits living in the region and founded the only Hungarian male monastic order that still exists today, the Pauline Order. The population of the village still cherishes the linguistic and folk culture of the settled Slovaks, which is also reflected in local events, folk costumes, and traditional programs. The Chapel of Our Lady and the associated pilgrimage site are places of outstanding religious and spiritual importance. The highest point of the Transdanubian Central Mountains, the 756-meter-high Pilis Peak rises above the village. A perfect panoramic view can be enjoyed from the Boldog Özséb lookout tower. An air defense missile base of the Hungarian People's Army operated under the summit of Pilis Peak until 1996. During the Cold War, it served to protect the airspace of Budapest, and the bunkers were used to receive and hide missile-carrying trucks. Despite the military activity, one of the greatest plant rarities in our country, the Pannonian ferule (*Ferula sadleriana*), was able to survive.

© Pál Kézdy



PANNONIAN FERULE CONSERVATION

The Pilis Peak is one of the most popular paragliding and hang-gliding jump sites near the capital, and more than half of the world population of the Pannonian ferule lives here. Trampling by athletes and hikers could lead to the extinction of this strictly protected wildflower. In order to protect its habitat, the Pilis Park Forestry and DINPD have agreed with representatives of paragliders and hang-gliders. A safe jump site has been created for them on the nearby Éles-kő Rock. A steel-structured educational trail leads through the fenced habitat of the Pannonian ferule. Hikers can enjoy the unique view while walking along it without damaging the rare plant. At the same time, the metal plank prevents paragliding here.

Jump site from Éles-kő Rock



A Steel-structured raised educational trail at the habitat of the Pannonian ferule



PILISCSÉV



The first documented mention of the former Hungarian village is from 1262, in the forms of Cheu or Chw. Its earliest lord was László Csév. The village known today was established after the anti-Turkish wars with the repeated settlement of the Slovak population. In the Middle Ages, the Esztergom chapter planted grapes on the hillside and most of the cellars of the Öreghegy cellar-village were built during this period, and even now we can find cellars that are 100-150 years old. The Piliscsévi Pincefalu Association works to preserve winemaking traditions and the local cultural and Slovak national heritage. Thanks to them, the PiPi Festival (Piliscsév cellar-village Festival – Piliscsévi Pincefalu Fesztivál) is an annual cultural wine festival that awaits visitors with open cellars, local wines, music, a craft fair and cultural programs. From Piliscsév and Keszthely we can reach the entrances to Hungary's third longest cave, the Ariadne cave system.



The cellar-village of Piliscsév

© Katalin Cséfalvay



PiPi Festival

© Szilvia Holicska

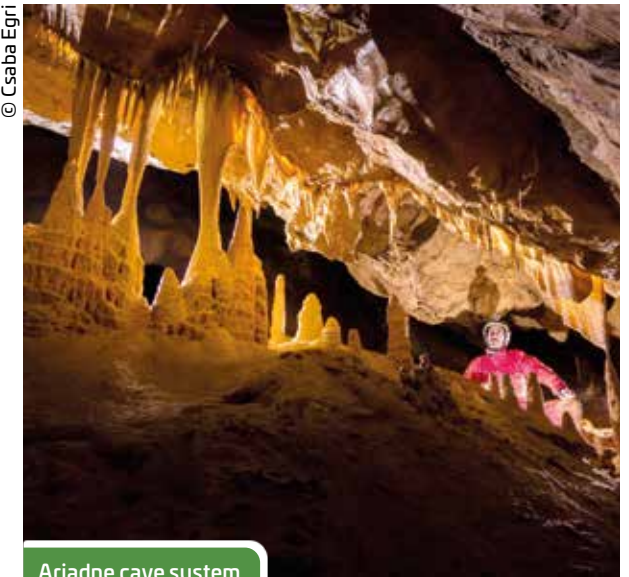
CONSERVATION OF THE CAVES AND THEIR RESIDENTS

The Pilis block, built up of Triassic carbonates, hides around 450 caves thanks to its geological features – from simple, spacious prehistoric caves to complex cave systems several kilometres long. The third longest cave in Hungary, the Ariadne cave system, over 20 km long and 206 m deep, is located in the Pilis BR area.

Its spacious main entrances, often visited by tourists – the Legény and Leány caves – provided shelter for people from the Neolithic era. In the winter, it is home to a very significant bat population. In order to protect the geological values of the cave and ensure that the bats are not disturbed, its entrances were closed with iron doors equipped with bat entrances. It is highly protected and can only be visited to a limited extent even by experienced cavers.

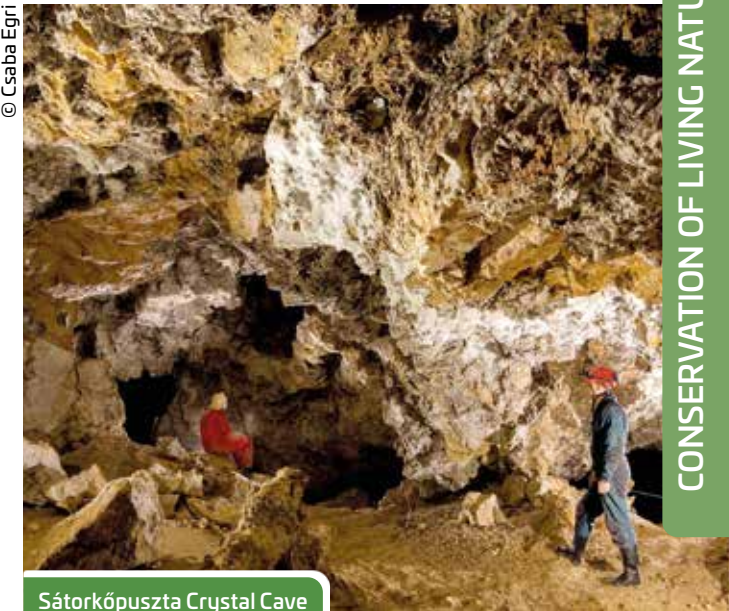
The most famous cave in the region is the Sátorkőpuszta Crystal Cave on Strázsa Hill, also strictly protected. Its characteristic passages formed by thermal water and snow-white crystalline mineral deposits make it very spectacular. Its walls are covered with calcite and aragonite crystals and gypsum deposits. The Benedek Endre Cave Research Association, which researches the cave, occasionally organizes visitor days.

© Csaba Egri



Ariadne cave system

© Csaba Egri



Sátorkőpuszta Crystal Cave



The Petőfi square of Budakalász

© Zoltán Szabó

BUDAKALÁSZ



Budakalász stretches from the Szentendre Danube to the Kevély-nyereg (Kevély Saddle) in an east-west direction. Excavations have been carried out at fifteen archaeological sites in the town and the Dolina Valley, which has been inhabited since the Neolithic Age. The oldest cart representation in Europe, the Budakalász cart, was found here, and the Green Cave, which opens on the side of the Kevély, is an important Neolithic site. The current culture of the city is enriched by the Serbian and Swabian nationalities, and its textile industry history is also significant. After World War I, Henrik Klinger moved his textile factory from Bratislava to Budakalász, which provided work for thousands of residents of the surrounding settlements in the 20th century. The town is committed to nature and environmental protection, and recently Budakalász has become famous for its fight against the development of its green areas. The Szentendre-Danube is bordered by a very beautiful softwood forest. Under the old black poplars and white willows, summer snowflake and grove starflower bloom. The habitat is enriched by large dead tree trunks. In the early hours of the morning, we can also meet beavers on the shore. The area is also protected by local and Natura 2000 protection. Luppa Island is a popular destination for rowing in Budapest, and its listed holiday homes and famous plane tree row can be admired by crossing by ferry.



The Danube riparian forest is a protected natural area of local importance in Budakalász

© Pál Kézdy

TREE-OF-HEAVEN EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) spreads extremely aggressively. Due to its excellent germination capacity, it is almost impossible to suppress it using mechanical methods. It is not worth cutting it down, because it only promotes its reproduction. It is characterized by the fact that it first reproduces in populated settlements, especially in neglected parts of settlements, as well as along roads, railways, and embankments. From there, the individuals that turn to fruit further infect gardens, cemeteries, parks, and the natural ecosystem. We can only protect natural areas from it if we also clean up the inner areas. In recent years, DINPD, in cooperation

Injection of tree-of-heaven in Pilismarót, at the Reformed Cemetery



with local governments, has implemented an idol tree replacement program in the settlements of the Pilis BR. With the help of summer internship students, they surveyed all the *Ailanthus* trees in 21 settlements and selected 120 individuals that were infecting their environment with their abundant seed production.



Tree-of-heaven in Budakalász, among the Barát-stream

The trees were injected with herbicide to prevent them from regenerating from root suckers. The felling of large trees was done using alpine techniques in order to protect houses and graves. For every *Ailanthus* tree cut down, a native tree sapling was provided, which was planted by the local governments.

Planting native seedling in Pilisszentiván Old-cemetery



CSOBÁNKA



In Csolbánya, on the banks of the Dera stream, Doctor Sándor Martin had a sanatorium built in 1898, and he named the area after his wife, Margit-liget. In 1909, József Wettstein, the inventor of the serum against pneumonia, bought it and converted it into a lung sanatorium. The Margitliget Castle operated as a war orphanage from 1917, served as the home of the Special Education Institute from 1950 to 2007, and is currently operated as accommodation by the Dévai Szent Ferenc Foundation. The Hubertus Chapel was built in 1904 on the top of the neighboring Kápolna hill.



The steep cliffs of Oszoly and Csúcs-hegy give the settlement a high-mountain landscape character. At the same time, these cliffs also represent a very special habitat.

© Ede Somorjai



In Hungary, a strictly protected moth, the etched taupe (*Charissa variegata*), is known only in the rocky habitats around the Danube Bend. Its characteristic feature is the orange wavy line that runs along the surface of all four wings.

© Adrián Novák



The nesting site of the peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is a traditional rock climbing site, the use of which must be restricted during the breeding season. Nature conservation officers and civilian nature guards ensure that nesting is undisturbed.

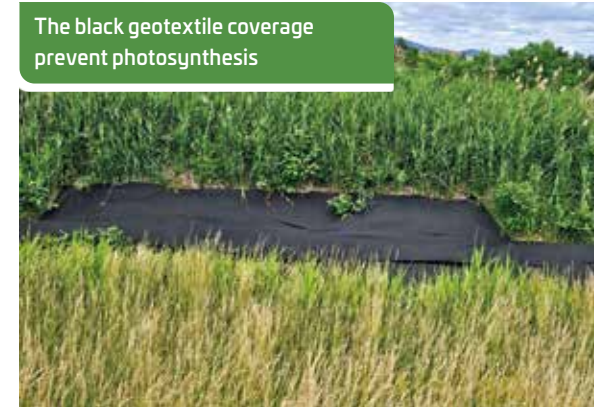
© Antal Klébert

JAPANESE KNOTWEED CONTROL

Similar to the tree-of-heaven, the Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia x bohemica*), which grows to a height of a human, also multiplies in the disturbed habitats of settlements and spreads along streams and canals, infecting the natural biosphere. Along the Dera stream that flows through Pilisszentkereszt, Csolbánya, Pomáz and Szentendre, local governments have joined forces with civilians to suppress the invasive plant. DINPD is investigating the effects of four methods in an experiment that can prevent the return of Japanese knotweed after the first mowing.

After all interventions, care must be taken to restore vegetation on the resulting open soil surfaces by sowing seeds or planting seedlings.

The black geotextile coverage prevent photosynthesis



Shoots growing through a metal grid laid on the ground are mechanically damaged, so the mesh destroys the plant by tiring it out



Along the Csolbánya section of the Dera-stream the fresh growth of the Japanese knotweed are grazed by goats



The frequent mowing of the stream-coast is an effective solution



© Pál Kézdy

PILISSZENTKERESZT



On the edge of the settlement are the ruins of the former Cistercian abbey. Queen Gertrudis, the first wife of

King Andrew II, who was murdered in 1213, was buried here. The exact reason for the assassination is unknown; the best-known literary adaptation of the event is the drama *Bánk bán* by József Katona.



At the Klastromkút in Pilisszentkereszt, September 24, 1888

© recorded by Dr. Ödön Téry

On the southern side of Dobogókő is the fissure labyrinth called the Zsivány Rocks, where 15-20-25 meter high walls have formed in the andesite agglomerate

© Katalin Cséfalvay



The Dobogó-Rock (699 m), belonging to Pilisszentkereszt, is today one of the most visited tourist destinations in the Pilis BR, and at the same time we can rightly call it the cradle of domestic tourism. On the initiative of Dr. Ödön Téry and Gusztáv Thirring, the idea of founding the Hungarian Tourist Association was born on September 24, 1888, at the Klastrom-kút in Pilisszentkereszt.

In the summer of 1898, the country's first tourist lodge in the central mountains, named after Dr. Loránd Eötvös, was built on Dobogókő. In the first issue of the *Turisták Lapja* (Tourist Magazine), statistician and geographer Gusztáv Thirring wrote in his article entitled *Pilis and Dobogókő* in 1889: "Dobogókő is definitely the most beautiful point in the vicinity of the capital, the view of which captivates and amazes everyone who has ever enjoyed it."

VISITOR MONITORING

DINPD, Pilis Park Forestry and the University of Debrecen have been carrying out visitor surveys in the Pilis BR area for 9 years on one weekend in October. The survey provides a good basis for planning ecotourism developments in the area and has also brought together an enthusiastic team of volunteers. Some of the results of the survey:

- The Pilis BR tourist routes are visited by nearly 1 million hikers annually;
- The busiest tourist routes are located around Dömös, Dobogókő, the Dera Gorge and the Prédikálószték;
- More than half of the hikers come from Budapest;
- 75% of visitors take a half-day tour;
- More than 60% of visitors use mobile applications for orientation, but 20% of hikers still stick to paper maps.

Visitors were interviewed by volunteers who were staying at the Mogyoró-hegy Forest School



In 2025 almost 100 volunteers took part in the visitor monitoring

The Stube Restaurant in Pilisvörösvár provided cold lunch packages for the volunteers



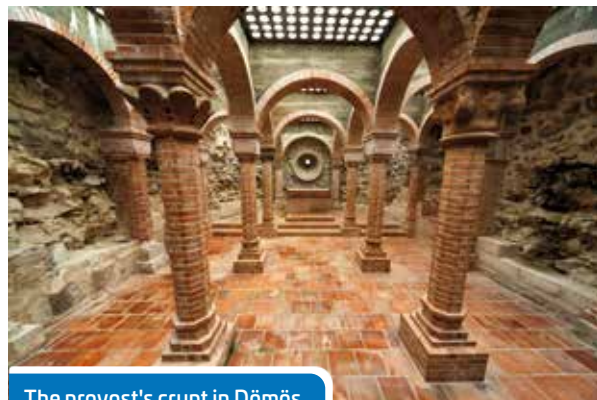
DÖMÖS



Dömös was a favorite residence of the Hungarian kings in the 11th century. The former palace and church were destroyed during the Turkish period, but the beautifully restored, Romanesque-style provost's crypt preserves the memory of this era. Today, it welcomes visitors under the name of the 1000-year-old Church with ecumenical services, cultural programs, and a presentation of monuments.

The most visited and most exciting tourist routes of the Pilis BR start from Dömös. One of them is the Rám Gorge, which is a gorge valley of volcanic origin, running roughly north-south. Its depth exceeds 35 meters in several places, its width does not even reach three meters in some places, and water constantly flows at the bottom. The one-way pedestrian traffic is facilitated by metal stairs and

handrails. The other popular route is the tourist path leading to the Prédikálószték (Preachy Chair), past the uniquely shaped, huge andesite rocks of the Vadálló Stones.



The provost's crypt in Dömös

Vadálló Stones

© Katalin Cséfalvay

LOOKOUT TOWERS IN THE PILIS BIOSPHERE RESERVE



Bölcső-mountain lookout tower

The lookout towers of the Pilis BR have always been the most popular tourist destinations. The Pilis Park Forestry has built several lookouts in recent decades. On the 756-meter-high Pilis Mountain, the Boldog Özséb lookout tower was built in 2014 by converting a geodesic tower. Several towers have stood on the Bölcso Hill near the Lajos Spring since 1934; the newest one was opened in 2021. The lookout tower built in 2016 on the 639-meter-high peak of the Visegrád Mountains, on the Prédikálószték, is one of the most visited hiking spots, also because of the nearby Vadálló Stones.



The view from Prédikálószték (Preachy Chair) © Katalin Cséfalvay



Bildstock in Pilisszentiván

PILISSZENTIVÁN



The current village was founded in 1724, when five Catholic German heads of families from Franconia signed a settlement contract with the Augustinian Order. Brown coal mining determined the life of the village until 1970, and it was thanks to this that there were no evictions from here after the Second World War. Swabian traditions do not only live on in the holidays, but also determine everyday life. The natural and cultural values of the settlement are also presented by the Jági education trail and the Slötyi education trail. There are nine Bildstock on the outskirts of Pilisszentiván today. Each of these “picture stones” had a saint’s image painted on it, under which was a quote with the name of the person who made the stone or the person in whose memory it was made. Each stone had an iron cross on top. In Swabian villages, they may have served as boundary markers, and they also served as memorials or places of prayer.



The Pilis Len Visitor Centre in Pilisszentiván

© Ádám Selmeczi-Kovács

PILIS LEN VISITOR CENTER

The Pilis Len Visitor Center in Pilisszentiván is named after the dolomite flax (pilisi len – *Linum dolomiticum*), a strictly protected wildflower that lives only here in the world. The architecturally exciting, wood-clad building houses an interactive nature conservation exhibition, and outdoor activities await children's groups in its courtyard. The visitor center is an important base for kindergartens and schools in the region. The four environmental educators working here hold bird ringing demonstrations, water biology classes, and school project days for children.

© Pál Kézdy



Pilis Len Award Ceremony in 2024 at the Pilis Len Visitor Center

© Gyöngyi Berkó



Pilis Len Visitor Centre

Every year, the Pilis Len Visitor Center hosts the Pilisi Len Award, established by the municipality, which is awarded to those who have done a lot to preserve the natural values of the settlement.

The Basilica of Esztergom

© Gergely Tóth

ESZTERGOM



The Castle of Esztergom was the residence of Prince Géza. His son, King Stephen, was born and crowned here, and during his reign, the castle became the king's most important seat.

The Basilica of Esztergom is the tallest building in our country; the distance measured from the floor of the crypt to the top of the cross on the top of the dome is 100 m. The Bakócz Chapel, built in the 16th century, was dismantled into 1,600 pieces at the beginning of the 19th century and incorporated into the basilica that was being built at that time as a side chapel. Today, this chapel is the only intact renaissance monument in our country.

The Strázsa-hegy (Guard Hill) functioned as a military shooting range for more than a hundred years; thanks to this, the natural values were preserved almost untouched. A nature trail leads up to the lookout tower on the top of the hill, with its brick walls and a domed tower resembling a lighthouse, from the Kököröcsin Ház (Pasqueflower House) Forest School, which is operated by DINPD.

The view from the Strázsa-hegy to the Basilica of Esztergom

© Katalin Cséfalvay

PASQUEFLOWER HOUSE
FOREST SCHOOL

The Kököröcsin Ház (Pasqueflower House) is the environmental education and ecotourism center of the Duna-Ipoly National Park near Esztergom. Its surroundings served as a military shooting and training range for more than a hundred years, until 1990. It is the “western gate” of the Duna-Ipoly National Park: the volcanic outcrops of the Pilis limestone and Visegrád Mountains reach here from the east.



Pasqueflower House

The lookout tower of
the Kis-Strásza-hegy

The historical remains and natural values of the abandoned Soviet military shooting range can be viewed on a professionally guided “Bunker Tour”. The lookout tower of Small-Guard Hill (Kis-Strásza-hegy) is decorated with Cyrillic graffiti. The tour also includes a prisoner of war cemetery and an underground concrete bunker. We can get to know the wildlife of the sandy grasslands and the rare Pannonian oak forests. In March and April we can see pasqueflowers and irises.



Bunker tour

VISEGRÁD



The city is now the tourist center of the Danube Bend, and in the Middle Ages it was the seat of the Hungarian kings. The Slavic name Visegrád means citadel. The former Roman fortress was replaced by an Ispan castle, which was destroyed by the Tartars, and then Béla IV had a double castle system built in its place in the 1250s. In 1335, it was the site of one of the most important events in European economy and trade, the meeting of the Hungarian, Polish and Czech kings. Louis the

Great kept the Holy Crown and the Polish crown here. From 1476, during the reign of King Matthias, it was one of the European centers of Renaissance arts and science. The Solomon Tower functioned as a residential tower of the lower castle. During the 150 years of Turkish rule, the castle system was destroyed and not rebuilt. Visegrád is still a living history book: the Royal Palace exhibitions, the Knights' Tournaments, the International Palace Games, the King Matthias Historical Playground and the Crafts Courtyard bring the past closer.

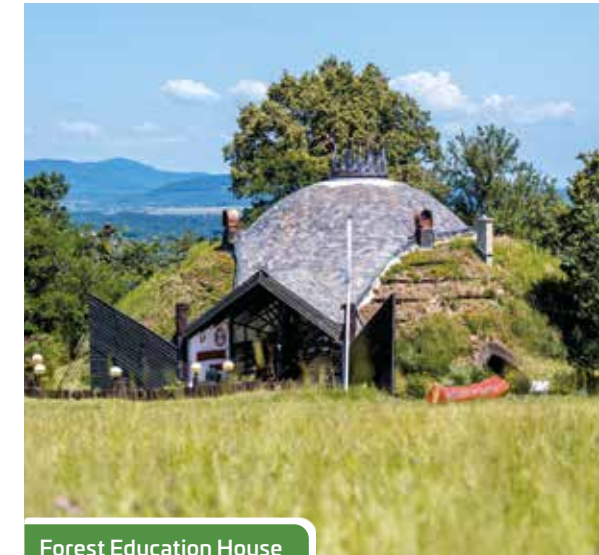
The Visegrád Gorge in the Danube Bend

© Katalin Cséfalvay

MADAS LÁSZLÓ FOREST SCHOOL

On the Mogyoró Hill above Visegrád, the Pilis Park Forestry established the first Hungarian forest school in 1979, which bears the name of its founder, László Madas. From one-day excursions to 3-5-day forest school programs to one-week nature conservation camps, they provide children with exciting activities.

Accommodation is provided by 10 wooden houses and a 30-person yurt house, renovated in 2026. The uniqueness of the forest school is given by the breathtaking panorama and the organic building of the Forest Education House, which provides space for nature education activities.



Forest Education House

THE REHABILITATION OF THE VISEGRÁD UPPER BAY

The Visegrád Upper Bay was created as part of the construction of the Bős-Nagymaros Dam. After the construction was stopped, aggressively spreading invasive alien plants proliferated on the artificial neck-of-land. The introduced species of dogwood, green maple and American ash form an impenetrable thicket and infect other areas.

Their suppression is being carried out by local families and DINPD. Their goal is to create natural vegetation that provides a more beautiful environment for hikers. The area has been cleaned and grazed with ancient domestic sheep breeds (cikta, cigája, racka), thus preventing the unwanted species from overgrowing.



Managing false indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*) by grazing

© Pál Kézdy

UNESCO

MAN AND BIOSPHERE PROGRAM



unesco

Biosphere Reserve

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, launched the Man and Biosphere (MAB) program in 1971 to protect the natural environment. The program designated so-called biosphere reserves (BRs), the main purpose of which is to protect exceptionally valuable areas representing the Earth's major ecosystem types and to

observe the artificial and natural processes occurring there.

Unlike other nature conservation statuses, the primary task of a biosphere reserve is not to conserve natural values, but to improve the relationship between man and nature.

Currently, a total of 797 biosphere reserves are registered in 145 countries, of which 25 are transboundary initiatives.

Hungary was among the first to join the initial program in 1971. The Hungarian National Committee of the Biosphere Reserve was established under the auspices of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to define and manage domestic tasks. There are currently six biosphere reserves in Hungary. The establishment of the Aggtelek, Fertő-lake, Hortobágy, Kiskunság and Pilis Biosphere Reserves was accepted by the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Secretariat between 1979 and 1981. The sixth area is the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve, which stretches across five countries and was approved for designation in 2021.

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Written by: Pál Kézdy, Réka Előd, Sára Borzsák

Professional reviewer: Julia Arnóth, Zsolt Baranyai, Gergő Horváth, Zsófia Krivács, András Kun, Adrián Novák, Csilla Szabó, Andrea Vigh

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Inside back cover: Autumn meadow with sedge (photo: Katalin Cséfalvay)

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