

ULCINJ SALINA

A bird paradise and important nesting
and resting site on the Adriatic Sea

#forsalt #forbirds #forpeople





A salt basin in the Ulcinj Salina.

Preface

We are happy that you are interested in Ulcinj Salina. This brochure will provide you with useful information about the Salina which is a very special place for birds and for people. We hope you will be inspired to visit this beautiful and precious site in the near future.

More than 250 species of birds, interesting plants and a beautiful landscape can be found in the Ulcinj Salina. Yet, this astonishing place with a high biodiversity is under great threat.

Sadly, no salt has been harvested since 2013. This leads to a drying out of the salt basins and thereby makes the Salina less attractive to birds. The Salina is a great example of how vibrant economic activity and nature protection can go hand in hand. This is achieved through wellmanaged water circulation leading to a rich

habitat for birds. Therefore, EuroNatur Foundation and its partners BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, Center for Protection and Research of Birds (CZIP), Dr. Martin Schneider-Jacoby Association (MSJA) and Tour du Valat are fighting for the protection of this valuable site. This brochure will give you information on the Salina's history, the problems the Salina is facing, and how the protection campaign #SaveSalina helps to ensure the survival of this important ecosystem.

The Salina is located near the town of Ulcinj on the Southern coast of Montenegro and was once a place of tradition and employment for the people of Ulcinj.

Please enjoy reading this brochure and let yourself be inspired for a visit to the Ulcinj Salina.



The #SaveSalina Campaign

There is an urgent need to shine a bright light on the suspicious activities threatening Ulcinj Salina and to achieve the necessary legal protection of this biodiversity hotspot through strong international pressure from all over Europe. To give Ulcinj Salina a voice, EuroNatur, CZIP, MSJA, BirdLife and Tour du Valat jointly developed the #SaveSalina campaign, which includes actions on local, regional and international levels across legal, political, media and publicity spheres. This brochure is part of the campaign and an important tool to spread the word about Ulcinj Salina.



#SaveSalina




Map

This map gives an overview of Ulcinj Salina and its basins. It can help you during a hike or bike ride through the area.

The birds listed (image order: starting in the bottom left corner and going counter clockwise) are some examples of birds that you may see during your visit.

- 1 *Calidris alpina* / Dunlin
- 2 *Sterna hirundo* / Common Tern
- 3 *Himantopus himantopus* / Black-winged Stilt
- 4 *Egretta garzetta* / Little Egret
- 5 *Tringa totanus* / Common Redshank
- 6 *Burhinus oedicephalus* / Eurasian Stone Curlew
- 7 *Motacilla flava* / Yellow Wagtail
- 8 *Microcarbo pygmaeus* / Pygmy Cormorant
- 9 *Glareola pratincola* / Collared Pratincole
- 10 *Phoenicopterus roseus* / Greater Flamingo
- 11 *Pelecanus crispus* / Dalmatian Pelican
- 12 *Plegadis falcinellus* / Glossy Ibis

Legend

	cycle and foot paths
	birdwatch point and tower
	water movement
EV:	evaporation basins
CR:	crystallisation basins
JEZERO:	salt basin
KNETA:	extension from 1980





map: MSJA

Salina Chronicles

Year	Event
1926 - 1934	Construction of the first salt-pans and other indispensable infrastructure (8.6 km ²).
1935	First harvest of industrially produced salt (approximately 6,000 tons).
1959 - 1980	Reconstruction and also expansion of the Salina, by including adjoining marshlands, to an overall size of 14.5 km ² , followed by a maximum yearly salt harvest of about 60,000 tons.
2003	Public enterprise Ulcinj Salina „Bajo Sekulić“ started to cooperate with EuroNatur and CZIP.
2005	Privatization of Ulcinj Salina (with the majority of shares held by the company Eurofond). The salt-making company “Bajo Sekulić” declared bankruptcy.
2006	To facilitate the protection of Ulcinj Salina as “Wetland of International Importance“, EuroNatur and CZIP completed the Ramsar application form for the Montenegrin Government - which has still not submitted it to the Ramsar Secretariat by 2019.
2008	EuroNatur and the Museum Joanneum published the “Management Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Natural Values of the Privately Owned Nature Park ‘Solana Ulcinj’, Montenegro”.
2008 - 2012	Listing of Ulcinj Salina in the spatial plan has changed several times between protected area and construction land for touristic use, creating uncertainty about its destiny.
2011 - 2018	The Salina was offered for sale by the bankruptcy management 14 times and for up to 257 million Euros.
2013	Salt production in the Salina stopped, and a process of ecological succession and physical degradation started.

Year	Event
2014	A group of salt workers founded a company to continue the salt production but in the night before the signing of the contract all pumps and other important material in the Salina were destroyed by unknown people.
2015	<p>1st International Conference on the Protection of Ulcinj Salina: The conclusion outlined deadlines and responsibilities for the protection and restoration of the water management.</p> <p>Parliament Decision from 2012 on the spatial plan was annuled and the first version of the spatial plan from 2008 came back into force listing the Salina as construction land.</p>
2016	<p>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed the Protection Study for Ulcinj Salina.</p> <p>2nd International Conference on the Protection of Ulcinj Salina: The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism declared the study by EPA to be insufficient to declare protection. But the Minister publicly declared that the national protection of Ulcinj Salina is just a matter of a few more months.</p>
2017	3 rd Conference on the Protection of Ulcinj Salina took place.
2018	<p>“Protection Study for Ulcinj Salina”, financed by the EU Delegation to Montenegro was published.</p> <p>4th International Conference on the Protection of Ulcinj Salina: The new Minister for Sustainable Development and Tourism declared that the EU-financed study on protection has been adopted by the Government and the recommendations of the study will be implemented.</p> <p>Protection of Ulcinj Salina is set as “closing benchmark“ in the EU accession negotiations and the process of national protection (as nature park) started.</p>
2019	Formal protection process is running.

The Story of Ulcinj Salina

Privatisation and bankruptcy

After nearly 90 years of successful salt production the salt production company "Bajo Sekulić" was privatized in 2005 and shares were bought by the fund Eurofond. Since the privatization Eurofond did not invest any money in the Salina and it appears as if it was winding the business down intentionally. Additionally, unknown criminals have destroyed the pumps and even stolen some of them. In 2013, the salt production was stopped. Since then, no more salt has been produced at Ulcinj Salina.

Offering Salina for sale

Since 2011, the bankruptcy management has been trying to make a profit by selling the Salina to big investors. It has been praising the Salina as perfectly suited for the development of a luxury resort with golf course, spa and marina. When these plans were published in December 2011, a huge wave of protest followed. However, this did not stop Eurofond. The bankruptcy management finally offered the Salina for sale at a price of 150 million Euros, which is 180 times the price that Eurofond paid in 2005 for its shares.

Unsolved ownership question

It has not yet been conclusively established what precisely was privatized in 2005. Eurofond maintains that it had acquired not only the capital equipment and the concession to produce salt, but also the entire site. This is belied by the fact that the Montenegrin state is registered as the owner of the site in the land registry of the town of Ulcinj. The ownership conflict must be solved by the Privatisation Council of the State of Montenegro, which is chaired by the prime minister. However, the government is not only embroiled in shady deals over the question of the ownership of the Salina, but it is also relying on a delaying tactics and empty promises with regard to the protection of the Salina. It is thus abdicating its responsibility.



EU pushes for international protection

Montenegro is a candidate for membership of the EU, and the EU Commission has been insisting for many years that the Salina should be protected for its conservation importance for species and natural habitat types. Even though this is part of the accession negotiations, nothing has happened so far.

Contradicting spatial plans

One example of this is the designation of the Salina as a protected or building area in the regional development plans. The Salina had been designated as a protected area in spatial planning documents and, in a secret overnight change, been designated as a potential building site again.

In 2017, a study funded by the EU was created, which points out that the Salina should be legally protected and revitalized. The Montenegrin government declared in April 2018, based on the conclusions of the study, to protect the site and to re-establish the salt production with high-quality salt (Fleur de Sel). But since then none of the necessary actions have been taken and at the moment the Salina is decaying.



photo: Martin Schneider/Jacoby

The salt extraction gave employment to several hundreds.

#forsalt

The Role of Salt for Mankind

There are two natural salts. One is rock salt, which is extracted from salt mines or salt brines, and the other is sea salt, which is extracted from the sea as in the Ulcinj Salina.

Salt has always been a component of the earth and plays an important role in the vital and economic development of mankind. In particular, the discovery that salt can prolong the durability of food was an important step. Nowadays, salt is also used for numerous purposes other than food processing. Some examples are: as road salt in winter, in the pharmaceutical industry and in cosmetic products. Salts such as gypsum and lime are also used in house building and painting.

Even the Celts (400-800 B.C.) used salt. They poured brine water onto the fire and then scraped the salt from the charred branches. With the Romans, salt was a valuable commodity and was often used as a means of payment. It is assumed that the English word "salary", meaning wages, originates from the word „salarium“ of that time.

Sea salt contains iodine from marine algae as well as a high proportion of amino acids and natural minerals such as bromine and potassium and is therefore a healthy component of the human diet. It is also recommended for external use on the skin. The top layer of the salt deposits during extraction in sea water salinas is the noblest. It has a special and strong aroma and is called salt flower (Fleur du Sel).

The salt production was done by manual work.



Functioning of the Salt Production in Ulcinj Salina

The story of the Ulcinj Salina began in the 1920s. From 1935 to 2013, up to 400 employees were producing 40,000 tons of salt annually in the most productive years!

How the Salina and salt production worked:

The salt extraction process is quite fascinating. The production season starts in April. The salty seawater with a concentration of about 29 grams NaCl/litre is channelled through large basins. The channel that brings the salt water from the sea to the Salina is about three kilometres long. By pumps and gravitation, the sea water flows from basin to basin of the Salina in various steps, increasing in salt concentration when water is evaporating from the sun's warmth.

Finally, the concentration reaches about 235 grams NaCl/litre in the smallest and most shallow basins, the so-called crystallisation pans. Here the "white gold", which remains on the basin's ground, can be harvested. The salt is pushed into big piles by the workers, loaded into special train wagons and transported to the collecting hall, where it is packaged.

The Salina provided employment for up to 400 people during the salt production and was deeply rooted in the tradition of Ulcinj. Even today, many inhabitants of the city still feel tightly connected to the salt works. A big problem, however, is that many of the former salt workers have grown old in the meantime and the knowledge of the traditional salt harvest is getting lost, as is the connection of the people of Ulcinj with the salt works.



A Salt Child

I am a saline child. The Ulcinjaks know what it means: I grew up with the „salted bread“, sweet as sugar. My father, who worked in the Ulcinj Salina for decades, earned it and brought it home.

Every year, in the beginning of August, one day he came back from work, completely excited and happy and brought us, as he always called it, „the flower of salt“. He joyfully handed it over to my mother and she received it just as one receives the most beautiful bouquet of flowers. I knew that something important and significant was going on, but I was too small to understand and know that the first snow-white crystals were blooming on the Ulcinj Salina.

This first crystal, a sign of a rich salt harvest, was the most beautiful decoration in our house until the following summer, when it was replaced by a new one.

Many years later I learned and recognized that the magnificent salt crystal was indeed the most beautiful flower and only later did I understand the happy tears shed by my mother. Because the salt flower meant that there would be a good salt harvest and my father would earn enough money for the family.

I hope, I believe, I am convinced that the now abandoned salt basins will blossom again. In the middle of summer they will shine again like snow-covered, glowing and salty flower fields. And I hope that little boys in Ulcinj will again watch their parents looking happily at a lump of salt, confused, and that together with their mothers they hope that no rain will fall in mid-August and destroy the flowers in the basins of the Salina.

I see the salty snow-white flowers again in the glass showcases of Ulcinj's houses.





photo: Adnan Perović

‘This first salt crystal was the most beautiful decoration in our house’.

Muzafer Beljo Čauši, well-known writer from Montenegro



#forbirds

The Salina, with its 1,500 hectares, represents one of the most significant nesting and resting sites for numerous water birds along the Adriatic Flyway. It is an important stop during their migration between Europe and Africa. More than 250 species of birds have been recorded in the Salina. With this number of species, its size and its perfect location on the migratory route, the international significance of the Salina for birds is unquestioned.

Here you can see some examples of the 250 bird species that can be seen in Ulcinj Salina.



European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*)



Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)



Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)



Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)



Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)



Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*)

#forbirds

photo: Kerstin Sauer



Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)



Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)



Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*)

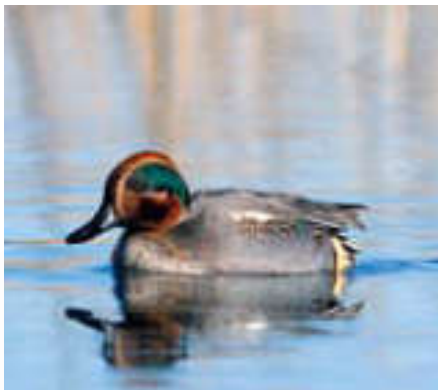


Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)





Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)



(Eurasian) Teal (*Anas crecca*)



Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)



(Black-crowned) Night Heron
(*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

all photos: Peter Sackl

Other Animals in the Salina

These are some examples of animals that you might see in Ulcinj Salina.



photo: Karl Roth

Conehead Mantis (*Empusa pennata*)



photo: Peter Rütger

Blue-Winged Grasshopper
(*Oedipoda caerulea*)



photo: CZIP

Southern Darter (*Sympetrum meridionale*)



photo: CZIP

Sheltopusik (*Pseudopus apodus*)



photo: CZIP

Lesser Horseshoe Bat
(*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)



photo: CZIP

Hermann's Tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*)



photo: Dietmar Nill

Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

Plants in the Salina

On this page you can see some plants you might see when hiking or biking in Ulcinj Salina.



photo: CZIP

Common Glasswort (*Salicornia europaea*)



photo: Peter Rütter

Chimney Bellflower (*Campanula pyramidalis*)



photo: Karl-Ernst Friederich

Seaside Eryngo (*Eryngium maritimum*)



photo: Peter Rütther

Common Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*)



photo: Peter Rütther

Samphire or Rock Fennel (*Crithmum maritimum*)



photo: Peter Rütther

Common Golden Thistle (*Scolymus hispanicus*)



photo: Peter Rütther

Prickly Parsnip (*Echinophora spinosa*)

#forpeople

The Saltworks and the People

For the people from Ulcinj the Salina is a symbol of „prosperity and identity“, in spite of the really hard work of the „salt pickers“, who in the scorching heat shoveled the “white gold” with spades and in rubber boots. And one had to work fast, as everybody was afraid that the good weather would change and the rain would start and destroy the harvest. So, everyone shoveled along, in three shifts so that the hangar would be full with the salty crystals and they could start processing to bring the product of „love, sun and the sea“ to the market.

For most Ulcinjaks, especially those who worked in Ulcinj Salina, it is really hard to understand that the Salina as they knew it no longer exists. No one thought the Salina would ever be closed - as there would always be the seawater, the sun and the wind.

For many, the salt works was a home, people celebrated and mourned together. It meant community and it was like a family. The Salina gave security, a regular income and therefore a good life. For most salt workers it was as if they had been robbed of their identity overnight when the Salina was closed. As Pavle Djurić (94 years old and the oldest former employee still alive) would say: „The salt works was like a mother to us, you know what that means, mother?! And not only for its employees, but for all citizens of Ulcinj.“

The privatization came with financial consequences. Many of the employees were not paid the payments to which they were entitled for their pension fund, so that although the retirement age is reached and the legally prescribed working years are enough, they cannot retire. Many of them are owed their wages for several years. The last employees to be put on the street have become social welfare recipients. They fought and still fight, but the system of Eurofond plays on time.



Hope germinated with the internationally aroused interest when finally the EU seemed to embrace the protection efforts. With the engagement of the diplomatic corps in Montenegro, the NGOs (national and international) and the pressure of the EU on the Montenegrin government to protect the Salina, the younger population became increasingly aware of it. This is especially important because the generation of the 1990s knew very little about it. Although almost every fourth person is somehow connected to the Salina, because there was always at least one close relative who worked at the Salina, no one had talked about it.

In conversations they started to understand the importance of the Salina in the context of urban development and in relation to biodiversity. In the national petition launched in January 2018, half of the signatures collected were from the younger generation. Without exception, they think that the Salina must be protected, for many

it also offers the possibility of new jobs. 32-year-old Mano Truma said: „If we can't get back the salt production, then at least we have to protect this unique place. We all owe it to our children and future generations.“



photo: CZIP



Voices from Ulcinj



“We had 80 years of tradition to learn how to produce salt, and what salt means to this region. ... Without salt production this place will die, it won't exist anymore.”

Aleksandar Perović – biologist



“The Salina had a great value, it gave back benefits, but they are losing it.”

Luka Donović – shepherd





all photos: Gregor Subić

“We used to drink water directly from Bojana River. Now it is polluted. It is contaminated ... A lot of tourists visit during summer, ... They leave a lot of trash, and we have to pick it up. We don't have the capacity to clean it all.”

Mahmud Karastanović – inhabitant of the area



“We used to say that we could go out into the centre of Belgrad with our workwear. You could also attend a wedding in these work suits, guaranteed!”

Smail Kaja – former salt worker



Voices from Ulcinj



photo: Gregor Subić

“Construction is going on and destruction of nature is happening. ... Lots of people come to take pictures of birds. They are rare, found only in the Salina here.”

Bucko Selčanin – inhabitant of the area

“Everybody loved Solana! ... Everybody used to say: Marry your daughter to one that works in the Solana! ... Solana was like a mother to Ulcinj. People of Ulcinj worshiped Solana.”

Pavle Djurić – former salt worker and oldest supporter of the campaign





“The Salina and our feathered neighbours were an important part of the lives of the people of Ulcinj. Today we are sad and outraged because we have to watch a part of our culture disintegrate bit by bit. It is unbelievable that the greed for money and corrupt machinations of some people alone may mean the loss of this important area for many inhabitants of the region as well as for the bird world throughout Europe. And all this at such a rapid pace. We are already seeing massive effects on birds and some species are barely visible anymore. But we will not give up our beloved salt garden without a fight.”

Zenepa Lika - founder and head of MSJA

„If we allow those who destroyed the salt works to build hotels and whatever, then one day we will see a sign at the entrance waiting for us to say: ‘Here once was the salt works of Ulcinj’. If we allow it, then we can also put up a sign directly at the entrance of the city saying: ‘Here was Ulcinj’.“

Mensur Pelinković - 21-year-old from Ulcinj



Further Possible Usages of Ulcinj Salina

For those interested in wildlife and culture, the Salina is a big attraction. As soon as it is back in operation, the Salina will offer a whole range of development opportunities from the extraction and sale of salt, to wildlife tourism, to a virtually limitless range of imaginative sustainable small business models.

At the moment the Salina is open for visitors who want to go hiking, bird-watching or do a bike tour. Bikes are for rent at the entrance of the Salina.

- Hiking tours
- Rental of bikes
- Mud baths
- Salt production and sale
- Guided tours for tourists
- Birdwatching
- Special hikes for photographers
- Selling of edible plants
- Souvenir Shop
- Restaurant



photo: CZIP



photo: CZIP

Benefits from Ulcinj Salina: mud and salt for healthy baths.





all photos: Janinka Lutze

The dams are perfect for hiking and biking and lead to different vantage points for bird watching.



photo: Viviane Meyer



Values & Possible Protection of Ulcinj Salina

Emerald Site under the Bern Convention

The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) is a binding international legal instrument for nature conservation in Europe as well as in some African countries. It works via three main aims: to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, to promote cooperation between states, to give particular attention to endangered and vulnerable species including endangered and vulnerable migratory species. In 1989 the Council of Europe launched the network of Emerald Sites under the Bern Convention.

Ulcinj Salina and Velika Plaža (an area totalling 2,839.46 hectares) were designated as candidate Emerald Site “Velika Plaža with Ulcinj Salina” by the joint meeting of the Ecological Networks Committee of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The Emerald network is regarded the basis for the designation of Natura 2000. However, the Salina still only holds the candidate status and was never enlisted as a full Emerald Site by the Montenegrin government.

Natura 2000 under the EU Nature Directives

Ulcinj Salina hosts many bird species that are protected under the EU Birds Directive and also has some species and habitat types listed in the annex of the Habitat Directive. This makes the site an absolute must for becoming part of the Natura 2000 European Network of Protected Areas, once Montenegro has joined the EU. Hence, this is also a big part in the accession negotiations of Montenegro and the EU. The protection as Natura 2000 Site would mean an absolute prohibition of degradation.

Important Bird and Biodiversity Area

Ulcinj Salina is labelled as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by Bird-Life International as it regularly holds significant numbers of globally threatened species and species with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe. For some species more than 1% of the global flyway population occur in the Salina regularly.

Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat is an international treaty established in 1971 for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands. There are nine criteria for sites to become a Ramsar site, one criterion must be fulfilled – the Ulcinj Salina even fulfils six of them, and must hence be protected under the Ramsar Convention, which Montenegro has signed and ratified.

Nature park - IUCN category V

On a national level, the Salina should also be designated as a nature park in coherence with the IUCN category V - Protected Landscape. As mentioned before, the Ulcinj Salina is a perfect example on how sustainable use and nature conservation go hand in hand – and even more: the best possible conservation of the site is its sustainable use as salt works as the pumping system for the salt production is the basis for the habitat to survive.



photo: CZIP - Igor Stojović

Dikes separating the salt basins in Ulcinj Salina.

Impressum and Partners

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Channels transport the water from the sea into the Salina where it is distributed



euRONATUR



photo: Gabriel Schwaderer

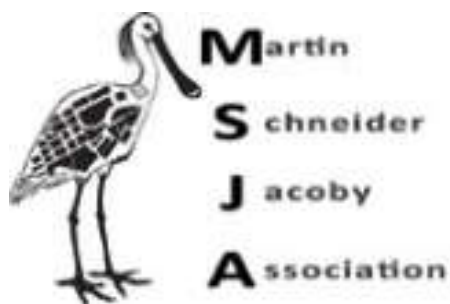
between the basins.

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In cooperation with:



View on one of Ulcinj Salina ´s basins from the hiking and biking trails.





For salt.

For birds.

For people.