The Danube Delta is a paradise for **wildlife**, and after years of environmental neglect culminating in Ceauşescu’s plan to drain the Delta for agricultural use, it was declared a **Biosphere Reserve** in 1990, with over 500 square kilometres strictly protected, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site the following year. The reserve is also a member of DANUBEPARKS, a network of seventeen protected areas along the length of the Danube, which was formed in 2009.The area is particularly important for **birds**, which pass through during the spring and autumn migrations, or come from Siberia to winter here or from Africa to breed in summer. Besides herons, glossy ibis, golden eagles, avocets, shelduck and other Mediterranean breeds, the Delta is visited by reed buntings, white-tailed eagles and various European songbirds, as well as whooper swans, arctic grebes and half-snipes from Siberia, saker falcons from Mongolia, and egrets, mute swans and mandarin ducks from China. Its lakes support Europe’s largest colonies of pelicans, which come from Africa to breed. The best time to see birds is from April to early June (the latter being the wettest month of the year), and September. Some 135 species of **fish** have also been catalogued in the Delta, with healthy stocks of carp and pike, as well as a resurgence in sturgeon; the best time to fish is September and October. The Delta is also home to otters, mink, boars, wolves and other **animals**, while at night streets in the Delta villages are alive with frogs, beetles and hawk moths.