

7. WILDLIFE OF THE CASTLE LAKE

THE FAUNA OF SZIGETKÖZ 3.



The Castle Lake was part of the moat for the defence of the Mosonmagyaróvár castle, built at the beginning of the 16th century, which once received its water from the neighbouring Lajta river. It lost its military importance after Rákóczi's War of Independence (1703-1711). After its foundation in 1818, the Institute of Economics (the predecessor of today's university faculty) served the recreation and relaxation of the students and the townspeople.

By the 2000s, the condition of the lake had deteriorated, it has become muddy and neglected. It was extensively renovated in 2006 and has become a popular urban recreation area. It currently receives its water from the Lajta in the Malom-branch, which flows into the Lajta through a sluice. Castle Lake covers an area of about half a hectare and might be up to three metres deep in certain places.

ABOUT WATER...

Water is essential for life on Earth, without it life would disappear. Two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by water, which is why it is called the 'blue planet'. Most of the water is in frozen or saline form, with only a relatively small percentage suitable for human consumption. In our country, water scarcity due to climate change and the uneven distribution of water are the main problems.

Water pollution is an environmentally damaging process that results from human activities and poses a threat to living organisms. Most of the water pollution is caused by industry and agriculture, and to a lesser extent by households, transport, and tourism.

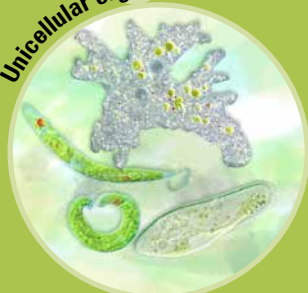


Even as private citizens, we can fight against pollution:

- Collect garbage selectively!
- Pay attention to the chemicals you use (switch to environmentally friendly ones)! Do not use chemicals near living aquatic resources!
- Use only as much water as necessary!
- Do not pour food waste or oil down the drain!
- Water your plants with collected rainwater!



Unicellular organisms



The invisible inhabitants of the Castle Lake and the Lajta River are the Paramecium aurelia, the Amoeba proteus and the Euglena viridis.

European Medicinal Leech (*Hirudo medicinalis*)



Inhabitant of swampy and lush lakes. Our country was once a leading power in leech therapy, as the creatures were often used for various medical treatments. Its collection almost made it extinct.

Emperor Dragonfly (*Anax imperator*)



It has a greenish-blue colour with a length of 60 to 80 mm. Dragonflies are among the oldest insect orders, with their ancestors appearing around 300 million years ago. They live underwater as nymphs for the first two years of their lives. They catch their prey in the air.

Common Pond Skater (*Gerris lacustris*)



It is widespread in most of Europe, with an elongated, dark blue or dark brown body. It lives on lakes and slow-flowing waters. It feeds on insects; the first two of its 6 legs are used to grab the prey.

Mud Bithynia (*Bithynia tentaculata*)



It is the most common species of gilled freshwater snail in our waters. Its shell is yellowish-brown and consists of 5-6 twists.

Edible Frog (*Pelophylax esculentus*)



It has a green colour with black spots. Its thigh meat has been eaten for thousands of years, hence its name. In Hungary - like other amphibians and reptiles - it is protected!

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)



This bird is now very well adapted to the human environment. It is one of our most commonly seen herons, including at Castle Lake. It is a protected species in Hungary.

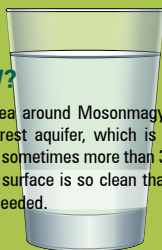
Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)



One of our most colourful birds. It feeds by fishing on the banks of rivers and streams. Present all year round, it can be seen during winter watching its prey from branches above the water. It is a protected species in Hungary.

DID YOU KNOW?

The inhabitants of the area around Mosonmagyaróvár drink the water from the Black Forest aquifer, which is protected by an underlying layer of gravel, sometimes more than 300 metres thick. The water brought to the surface is so clean that no chemical or mechanical treatment is needed.



DISCOVER THE LIFE IN THE WATER!

- By taking water samples from a pond or stream, you can easily observe the unicellular organisms living in it if you have a microscope at home.
- Keep duckweed, small aquatic plants, and freshwater snails in large jars at home. Watch them develop for a few weeks and then release them back into the wild from where they came!



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