

People for Nature, Nature for People



Impressum



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Brod Ecological Society-BED, one of the oldest environment and nature protection organization in Croatia

Brod Ecological Society-BED was founded on May 19, 1989, in Slavonski Brod, one of the few civil society organizations in Croatia that has been active since.

For the first 20 years, working exclusively on a voluntary basis, in the last 15, with small project team supported with broad base of members and volunteers.

Issues we care about we tackle regardless of project funding!

Nature and environment protection Engaging and organising volunteers
Protection and preservation of significant landscape **Gajna Education**
of the public Practical solutions based on science *Development of*
civil society **Sustainable agriculture** Habitat restoration *Governance*
in commons **Advocacy and lobbying** Traditional architecture *Activating*
citizens **Climate change** Genetic resources *Networking* **Cooperation**
with the public and private sector Cross-border cooperation *Influencing*
public policies **Wetlands** Natural defense against floods *Fighting*
against invasive species **Collaborative councils in protected areas**



Vision and Mission

VISION

(Why we exist)

- Preservation of disappearing landscapes, natural and cultural values, introducing sustainable development practices that support nature and biodiversity protection in our county.
- People aware of the value of nature and the environment, cultural heritage, preserved indigenous breeds, traditional construction methods.
- Sustainable public policies.

MISSION

(How we work — the journey to the vision)

- An active role in projects focused on the conservation of nature, biological and cultural diversity.
- Involving the local population in sustainable development processes that support the conservation of landscapes and traditional culture, and raising awareness about the value of genetic and natural resources through the preservation and restoration of endangered species.
- Protecting nature through the use of land and other natural resources in an environmentally friendly manner.
- Education and encouragement of institutions, other associations, local authorities, and the population to influence the preservation of nature and the environment through their activities.
- Promotion of principles of nature protection, environmental protection, and sustainable development (sustainable agriculture, traditional architecture methods).
- Application of practical solutions based on science, advocacy, and networking.



What is Gajna and where would it be **without BED?**

What is Gajna?

- A typical Slavonian floodplain pasture enriched with wetland flora and fauna, located east of Slavonski Brod in the municipality of Oprisavci.
- A significant landscape since 1990 and part of the European ecological network (Natura 2000).
- A Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for species and habitat types.
- The place where the first Grazing Community in Croatia was established for the joint management of the pasture.
- The place of preserved traditional architecture (wooden barn, guardian tower, well, "Stan na Gajni"), traditional grazing practices, and a refuge for Croatian native breeds of domestic animals.
- An exceptional blend of cultural and natural heritage in a landscape where grazing is a crucial ecological process for maintaining biodiversity by controlling invasive plant species.

TOUCHED NATURE

Centuries of various land management and land use practices — pastures, meadows, wetlands (and floodplains), as well as orchards and groves — have been a refuge for many wild species important in the biological diversity chain. If left untouched, invasive species and weeds that spread through flooding would quickly threaten Gajna as a habitat.



Without BED, Gajna would not have been protected in 1990

Brod Ecological Society–BED initiated the declaration of protection in 1990, and the association was entrusted with the oversight of the measures and conditions for nature protection in the protection declaration act. The supervision was taken over by the Public Institution **Natura Slavonica** since its establishment in 2006.

Gajna is home to **12 species of mammals, 37 species of birds, 11 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 24 species of fish**. Research has identified more than 250 plant species, many of which are protected.

WHY IS THE PROTECTION OF GAJNA IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE?

When the encroachment of invasive species happens, the retention capacity is reduced, diminishing Gajna's important role in flood protection for other areas. Invasive alien species cause not only ecological but also economic damage and negatively affect human health.

A healthy and balanced wetland habitat is extremely important in carbon storage and, by extension, in the fight against climate change.

Without a healthy habitat, pollinators that feed here, fish that spawn here, and birds that feed here would all be endangered.



Without BED, there would be no habitat restoration on Gajna through water retention projects

Gajna contains several alluvial depressions where water is retained during regular spring and autumn floods, even after the flood water recedes into the Sava River. A major challenge in preserving the biological values of Gajna was the drying of these wet patches.

The most important activities of BED related to Gajna from 1989–1990 were:

- Construction of a regulation dam on the Lateral Canal
- Geodetic surveying and connecting the marshes with channels
- Deepening of the Velika Gajna marsh
- Planting of indigenous vegetation (ash, oak, etc.)
- Construction of crossings over marshes





Bronze Age — First Depiction of a Domestic Animal —
Bull-Shaped Pendant, ostava Poljanci I,
13th—12th Century BCE

Without **BED**, there would be no habitat restoration through the removal of invasive species via grazing of Croatian breeds on Gajna.

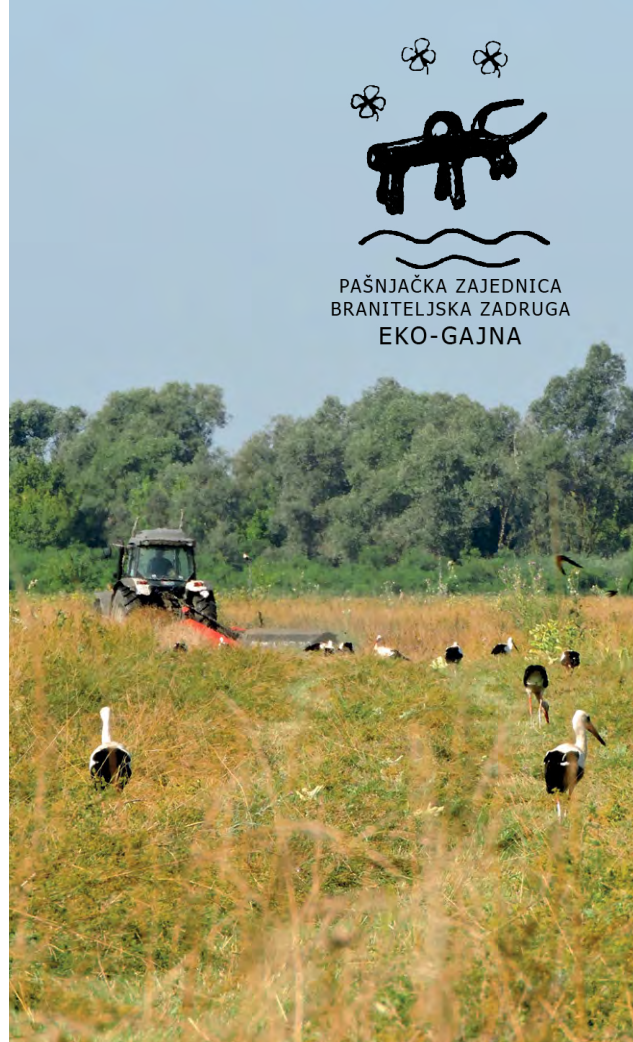
A successful EU project (2007–2009) which reintroduced native breeds to Gajna has been transformed by BED into a **15-year program** (until 2024), including management of a protected common pasture under special ecological and economic conditions. It was launched because the local population was abandoning livestock grazing and breeding and needed support that did not come from institutions.

Indigenous breeds, especially the **Slavonian-Srijem Podolian Cattle**, although economically uncompetitive, have been proven effective in removal of invasive species and thrive under

the challenging conditions of floodplain management and outdoor living. This way, we use low-productivity land to produce healthy food, while simultaneously preserving biodiversity and wetland habitats. In addition to the cattle, the 2024 livestock on Gajna also includes the **Posavina horse** and **Posavina goose**, while the **Cigaja sheep** and **Black Slavonian pig** are not grazing there anymore.



PAŠNJAČKA ZAJEDNICA
BRANITELJSKA ZADRUGA
EKO-GAJNA



Without BED, there would be no governance of commons recognized by institutions, no common pasture, nor the Grazing community on Gajna.

MEMBERS OF THE GRAZING COMMUNITY Eko-Gajna: CHAMPIONS OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION AND NATURE CONSERVATION

BED is one of the founders and members of the Grazing Community of the Veterans' Cooperative Eko-Gajna, alongside 16 family farms from the local community. The management program of this cooperative has included nature protection measures and conditions since 2012, and such specific restrictions are also present in the Lease agreement for Gajna as a public water body and in the Concession approval granted by the Public Institution Natura Slavonica.

The combination of grazing, mechanical removal, and cattle trampling is the only way to keep invasive species under control, as species spreading through flooding cannot be eradicated in floodplain areas.

The High Nature Value Grassland has its strict rules by which Gajna has been managed since 2019.

The ability to share resources, such as pastures or water, is key to the resilience of agricultural systems and communities. Thanks to BED's efforts, Gajna is currently the only place in Croatia that has preserved the traditional common pasture model and adapted this management to the existing legal framework.

The legal battle fought by BED to regulate the status and eligibility for subsidies, in collaboration with the relevant authorities, lasted nearly a decade. Without BED, there would have been no possibility for collective lease of agricultural land in the State Agricultural Land Act.



Without BED's work, would the Gajna Collaboration Council exist?

Collaboration councils for protected areas are not mandatory but rather recommended mechanisms, and only a few protected areas in Croatia have established such advisory and participatory bodies. Gajna is a common pasture, but also a public water resource, agricultural land, a protected area, national border area, so a body serving as communication among all sectors is essential to finding a balance.

BED promotes synergy, interconnectedness, and constant communication among all involved actors, despite differing interests and agendas, because this is the only way to reconcile differences toward the ultimate goal — preserving natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

The founder of the Collaboration Council is the Public Institution for the Management of Protected Nature Areas of the Brod-Posavina County — **Natura Slavonica**, in cooperation with **BED**. The members of the Gajna Significant Landscape Collaboration Council are representatives from various institutions, associations, educational institutions, state agencies, the private sector, and individual farms linked to Gajna.





Without **BED**, there would be no traditional architecture buildings on Gajna

Traditional timber construction, and later brick construction, which once prevailed in these areas, is increasingly being forgotten, and there are fewer and fewer old craftsmen who can pass their knowledge to new generations.

Since the 1990s, all traditional architecture objects on Gajna have been the result of the efforts of the BED, volunteers, and skilled craftsmen from the local community. Since its establishment, the Public Institution Natura Slavonica has also been involved in these long-term efforts. Environmentally friendly traditional architecture represents an ideal blend of the natural and cultural heritage of Slavonia.



Without BED, we wouldn't be able to see Slavonia as it once was on Gajna

Through the restoration of cultural and natural heritage buildings and the preservation of endangered native Croatian breeds, we can experience Slavonia (region) as it once was.

As early as the late 1980s, bridges and crossings were built to facilitate communication between people and livestock during regular floods, and these have been regularly renewed since then.

BED constructed two flood protection elevations, one of which is now the "Stan na Gajni" (info center), while the other is used to shelter livestock during floods.

Thanks to BED's efforts, in 1997, a replica of a traditional **wooden guard tower** was built as a birdwatching observation post, the first **well** (with mechanism called **đeram**) was constructed in 1997 and has been renovated several times, in 2006, an **oak barn** was built, and in 2007, a **flood protection elevation and the foundations for the information center "Stan na Gajni"** were established. In 2013, the Public Institution Natura Slavonica, in partnership with BED, built a visitor center and an **educational trail** as part of the EU Natura 2000 integration (NIP) project.





Without **BED**, there would be fewer volunteers and active citizens.

In the volunteer program supporting the conservation of the **Gajna Significant Landscape**, several hundred volunteers have participated between 1988 and 2024.

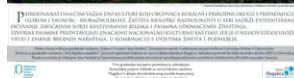
In 2023, BED recorded 4,740 working hours by employees and 4,362 volunteer hours.



Without BED, we would know less about topics important for the nature and the environment protection

We educate through:

- Educational materials
- Guiding visits of schools, universities, and professional groups to Gajna (biologists, geographers, agronomists)





We educate through the Green Library program.

The Green Corner, in collaboration with the City Library of Slavonski Brod, was established in 2019, and since 2021, there have been at least 4 events annually — focused on food, climate, nature, and active citizens.

We hold lectures, film screenings, citizen discussions, themed quizzes, media interviews, exhibitions, and more.



Nature knows no borders, **without BED**, Croatia would be less known in Europe and the world.



Common
Lands
Network



SAVA PARKS
NETWORK

ICCA Consortium



Together we are stronger; **without BED**, the connection between nature conservation and sustainable agriculture would have fewer advocates.

We have been part of the **Green Forum**, a network of environmental organizations, for over 20 years, and members of its coordination for the last 10. Since its establishment, we have been members of the Rural Development Network, now known as the **Common Agricultural Policy Network**.



Without BED, there would be fewer associations in rural areas or they would operate without support.

With BED's support, the following were established:

- The Club of Croatian Native Dog Breeds in Slavonski Brod in 1989.
- The Fishing Society "Mrist" in Oprisavci in 1996.
- The National Association of Breeders of Slavonian-Srijem Podolian Cattle (UUSSP) in 2008.
- The Regional Association of Breeders of Croatian Posavina Horses (UUHPK Slavonija) in 2010.

BED's team helps with the establishment, prepares materials, organizes logistics for annual meetings, and advocates for the associations' interests with the relevant ministries.



Without BED, important topics would not be recognized in institutions, nor would there be solutions for them in laws.

- **The Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the Rural Development Programme of the Republic of Croatia 2014–2020 and 2023–2027** — BED represents the Green Forum.
- **National Council for the Development of Civil Society** — 6th and 7th term — representing environmental and sustainable development organizations, Željka Gracin ZA / Iris Beneš (BED).
- **Partnership Council of the City of Slavonski Brod** (Urban Area of the City), Working Group for the Development Plan of Brod-Posavina County 2021–2027.
- **Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Programme for the Conservation of Native and Protected Breeds of Domestic Animals in Croatia...** and many other working groups and committees...
- **Active in lobbying, advocacy**, and the transfer of knowledge, standards, and best practices for effective networking and lobbying of civil society organizations to achieve influence on positive social change and actions for the common good in the Republic of Croatia and communicating EU policies.



Important Projects:

**1988 DREDGING AND FENCING BIG
GAJNA POND**

1990 DAM ON THE LATERAL CANAL

1991 ECO WINDOW

**1994-1995 GAJNA IN SCHOOLS -
PROTECTION OF LOCALITIES IN THEORY
AND PRACTICE**

**1995-2000 INTERNATIONAL COASTAL
CLEANUP**

**1995-1996 PROTECTION OF THE
WESTERN LATERAL CANAL BASIN**

**1996 PRINTING OF THE GAJNA NATURE
TRAIL BROCHURE**

**1997 RECONSTRUCTION OF THE
TRADITIONAL WELL**

**1997 RECONSTRUCTION OF THE
TRADITIONAL OBSERVATION TOWER**

**1999 CREATION AND PRINTING OF THE
GAJNA FLYER - PROTECTED
LANDSCAPE**

**2005 PROTECTION OF THE DANUBE
BASIN FROM POLLUTION, WESTERN
LATERAL CANAL BASIN**

**2006 PROTECTION OF BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY IN PART OF THE FLOODED
AREAS OF THE SAVA RIVER IN THE BP
COUNTY**

**2004-2006 TRADITIONAL
CONSTRUCTION - WOODEN BARN AT
GAJNA**

**2007-2009 "PROTECTION,
PRESERVATION, AND IMPROVEMENT
OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND
DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLOGICAL
AWARENESS THROUGH THE BREEDING
OF CROATIAN AUTOCHTHONOUS
BREEDS AND PROMOTING
ECOLOGICAL PRODUCTION"**

2009-2010 ECO-COMPOST

**2007-2009 "STAN" AT GAJNA - FLOOD
PROTECTION ELEVATION,
FOUNDATIONS FOR INFO CENTER**

2010–2012 CONSTRUCTION OF FLOOD PROTECTION ELEVATION AND DAM RECONSTRUCTION ON THE LATERAL CANAL

2010–2011 WE LOVE AND CARE FOR OUR HERITAGE

2010–2011 FIGHT AGAINST INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

2010 CREATION OF CONDITIONS FOR THE PERMANENT PROTECTION OF PODOLSKO CATTLE – MRRŠVG (partner)

2011–2012 PUBLIC POLICIES FOR THE LONG TERM: LAND – WATER – AIR (partner)

2011–2012 NATURA 2000 – NETWORK OF PROTECTED AREAS IN THE EU

2012–2016 HOUSING AT GAJNA (partner)

2013. RIGHT TO CIVIC INITIATIVES — HOW CAN WE INFLUENCE PUBLIC POLICIES IN THE EU?

2014–2015 TOGETHER FOR COMMON PASTURES – GLOBAL GREEN FUND

2014–2016 FLOODPLAIN AREA OF THE SAVA RIVER – MEETING OF CULTURE AND NATURE (partner)

2015–2016 LAST CHANCE FOR PODOLSKO CATTLE — EURONATUR

2018–2020 WETLAND HABITATS FOR LIFE 1 – EURONATUR

2018–2020 INNOVATIVE MINDS FOR SMART SCHOOLS (partner)

2018–2022 WETLAND HABITATS FOR LIFE 2 – EURONATUR

2020–2023 METAR FOR A BETTER CLIMATE (NETWORK FOR EDUCATION, TRANSITION, ADAPTATION, AND DEVELOPMENT) (partner)

2020–2023 JEDRO – PUBLIC POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: WATER, ENERGY, WASTE (partner)

2020–2022 ECHO! — STRENGTHENING ECO-ACTIVISM FOR URGENT CLIMATE ACTION (partner)

2019 – Present GREEN LIBRARY

2023–2026 EUKI – LANDCARE EUROPE CAPTURES CARBON: CARBON STORAGE THROUGH LAND CARE (partner)

2024–2025 CATALYST FOR CHANGE



Contact us, with **BED** you'll never be bad.

Do you love nature, think about the health of the planet, and believe the science that the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis are here and that we need to act?

Do you believe that the restoration and conservation of nature is an investment in our common public good, our health, a more stable climate, the regulation of water, land, air, healthy soil, and food?

The way we use resources, the way we use land, build infrastructure, produce and consume energy, eat, shop, and travel — all of these are areas for essential change. Change can be successful, but it must be just, participative, and inclusive.

Perhaps you simply feel a connection to the area where you live and have a desire to preserve natural and cultural heritage?

Do you think that as citizens, we should contribute to the development of our community?

Maybe you're interested in topics that we've always wanted to address but haven't had the time for, such as community gardens, repair shops, art activism, circular economy? Or maybe you have more of an entrepreneurial spirit and would enjoy branding and marketing local products. Whether you're an artist, influencer, gardener, biologist, or just an enthusiast from any field, or "just" a citizen who wants change, we're here.

Follow us on social media and join us in the activities we organize or educate yourself through some of our programs.

Maybe you even want to volunteer or convince us to hire you so we can change the world together? Get in touch with us.

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To secure the future, we believe it is essential to increase protection and restoration of nature, reduce the impact of climate change, and use natural resources responsibly!



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