

valleys of the Pilica, Biała Nida, Kamienna, Czarna Konecka and Krasna rivers.

The area described is a breeding range for numerous Hazel Grouse, Black Woodpecker, Great Crested and Little Grebe and, in the Nida River valley, for Black-tailed Godwit, Northern Lapwing and Common Redshank. There has been a noticeable increase in the population of Boreal Owl, Grey Wagtail, Syrian Woodpecker and White-tailed Eagle. The Świętokrzyskie Region is an important site for such rare bird species as European Bee-eater, Ural Owl, White-backed Woodpecker and Common Merganser. Another species to have settled here, albeit with a very small population, is Black Grouse.

## 68. Piotr Dębowski

### • Fishponds in Górkki and adjacent meadows ★★

#### Location

(50°21'N, 20°44'E) the site is located in the area of Lowlands of Central Poland (Niziny Środkowopolskie), near the section of the Nida River where it empties into the Vistula River, between the villages of Wiślica, Górkki and Nowy Korczyn, 80 km north-east of Cracow.

#### Description

Fishponds in Górkki occupy an area of approximately 350 ha and this makes them one of the largest pond groups in the Świętokrzyskie Region. The ponds are located in the flood valley of the Nida River, in the south-eastern part of the Nadnidziański Park Krajobrazowy (landscape park), which has been designated as a Special Protection Area in the Natura 2000 programme.

The fishponds in Górkki are located in open terrain. They are fed by the Maskalis River. The fishponds are a restricted, no-entry fish farming area with intensive fish-farming activity.

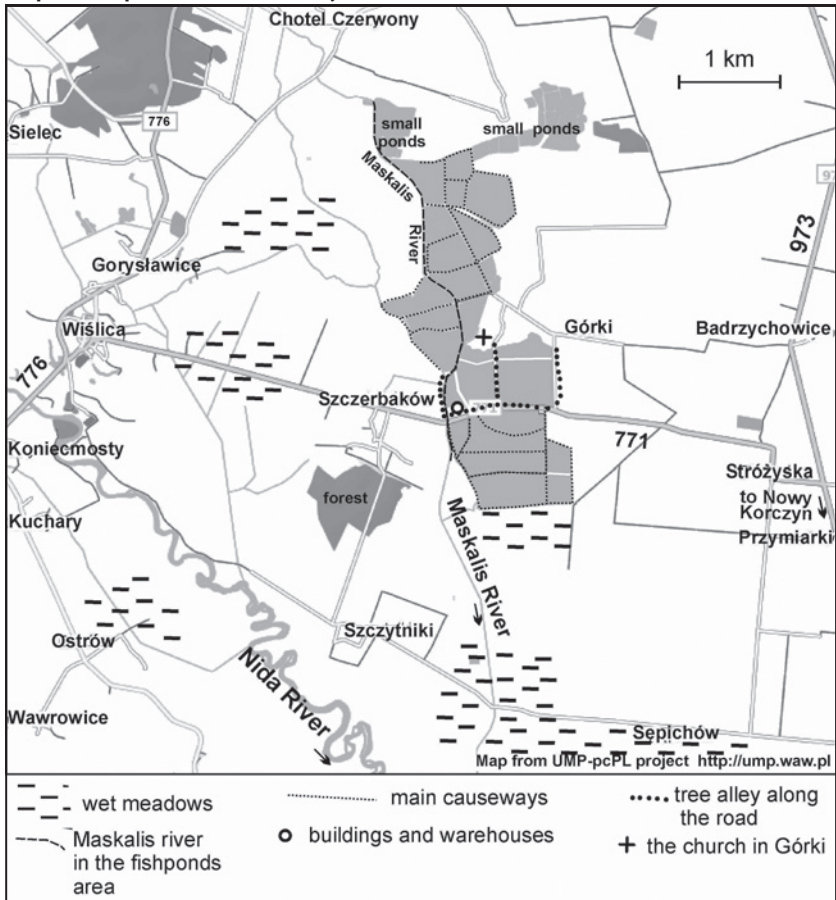
The banks of the ponds are overgrown with thick Common Reed and reed-mace beds, while willow trees, poplars and alder trees grow on certain parts of the causeways. In the proximity of the fishponds there are some patches of mown meadows and arable fields. Typical for the south and west sections of the site are wide patches of meadows, which are temporarily flooded.

#### Birds

The site is one of the most valuable sites in the Świętokrzyskie Region.

It is particularly important for birds during the breeding season, as well as during spring and autumn migration when it provides a resting and feeding ground.

Map 68. Fishponds in Górkı and adjacent meadows



The area is vital for water and wetland birds as well as for those birds whose habitat is reedbeds. It is an important bird site on a national scale. Interesting species living in the water environment, which also nest in the area, include Garganey (6–8 pairs), Red-necked Grebe (up to several pairs, decreasing in number), Northern Shoveler (around 10 pairs), Little Bittern (5–8 pairs), Eurasian Bittern (around 10 males), Black-crowned Night Heron (irregularly, up to a few pairs), Red-crested Pochard (irregularly 0–2 pairs), as well as Little and Black Terns. Species breeding in large number include Greylag Goose, Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe, Tufted Duck, Common Pochard, Mallard, Gadwall, Eurasian Coot, Common Moorhen and Black-headed Gull. There have been very irregular observations of breeding Horned Grebe, Eurasian Wigeon, Purple Heron and Ferruginous Duck.

Syrian Woodpecker inhabit copses of trees and old willows on causeways (note also the tree alley along the Wiřlica – Nowy Korczyn road). The best time of the year to go searching for this species is mid-April to

May. The fishponds in the northern part of the site with rich reedbeds, are inhabited by reed-dwelling species, such as Savi's Warbler (numerous), Bearded Reedling (around 10 pairs), and rails including Little Crake (up to 6 pairs) and Water Rail (numerous). Common Reed Bunting, Great Reed and Eurasian Reed Warblers form large populations. Some parts of the fishponds, particularly those located near an asphalt road (north of the road, directly behind the buildings and warehouses), are inhabited by Bluethroat (up to 5 pairs), while subspecies *svecica* has also been spotted there, albeit rarely. For the last few seasons, the latter has been seen irregularly.

The fishponds in Górkki are an important stopover location for migrating birds, particularly *Ciconiiformes* and waders. Their passage can be observed from April to May each year. The number of birds, as well as the presence of interesting species, very much depends on how high the reservoirs have been filled, and whether the muddy areas, which provide good feeding grounds during migration, are available. The fishponds are regularly emptied between September and October and re-filled in early spring (March – April). Apart from meadows, Ruff take advantage of another important resting location, such as the causeways (partly devoid of reedbeds) south of the road cutting across the fishponds. Due to the changes in the water level, some of ponds when underfilled provide attractive habitats as late as May. From July to the end of November it becomes a resting place for numerous nomadic Great Egret and Grey Heron. From mid-March to the end of April, with a peak falling in the first two weeks of April, and from July to October, there are large congregations (up to a few thousands birds) of ducks such as Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Wigeon, Tufted Duck and Eurasian Teal. During the migration period Western Osprey is commonly observed.

At the same time it is worth exploring nearby boggy meadows of the Nida River valley south of the villages of Szczytniki and Śepichów. Heading for Wiślica you need to turn for Szczytniki in the village of Szczerbaków. There is convenient parking by the grocer's shop in Szczytniki. Now you can go on foot south to the nearby meadows. You can also turn right at the crossroads in Szczytniki and at the end of the village you will get an excellent view over the valley and the meadows. If your destination is Śepichów you can carry out observations by the bridge over the small Maskalis River. It is a place with regular spring-time broads and potential breeding sites for waders. You should be careful though as the road embankment is rather steep, and it is difficult to find a place to stop your vehicle. The valley near the village of Szczytniki forms a particularly wide patchwork of wet and boggy habitats, typical of the Nida Basin (Niecka Nidziańska). It is a place to observe breeding Meadow Pipit, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Common Snipe and Northern Lapwing and, during migration, large concentrations of European Golden Plover, Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Bean

and Greater White-fronted Goose, White Stork, Little Egret (irregularly), Great Egret, Common Crane, and Jack Snipe (during spring migration). The fishponds and the meadows are the location where, in late autumn, i.e. October and November, you can find large concentrations of gulls, usually Black-headed and Caspian Gull, while Mediterranean Gull has been observed here for the last couple of breeding seasons. There are also large flocks of Common Starling which, in their roost in September, contain tens of thousands of birds. In the breeding season, the fishponds are a feeding ground for a pair of Black Stork nesting nearby.

In winter the Nida River Valley becomes an important habitat for raptors temporarily staying there over the winter months. These include Hen Harrier, Rough-legged Buzzard, Merlin, Common Kestrel, and White-tailed Eagle. Many species rare in the whole region have been observed within this site, including Pygmy Cormorant, Great White Pelican, Marsh Sandpiper, Yellow-browed Warbler, Aquatic Warbler, Booted Eagle, Parasitic Jaeger, Pallas's Gull, Citrine Wagtail, and Red Phalarope.

### **Access**

Thorough exploration of the fishpond area takes approximately 5–6 hours. You need to allow more time if you want to explore the meadows. Both the fishponds and the meadows are accessible on foot only. There is no vehicular entry to the causeways managed by the fish farm. To get to the north part of the fishponds you need to turn off the asphalt road heading for Nowy Korczyn, which cuts across the fishponds, and turn for the village of Górki. There is no car park in the area, but you can leave your vehicle by the shop in Górki (turn right when in the village), or, when you obtain permission from fish farm operators, at the fishpond causeway. You need to inform the Fish Farm in Górki (Gospodarstwo Stawowe w Górkach) ahead of your visit; their contact phone number is +48 41 379 2800. Alternatively, you can talk to the people working at the farm when you are there and let them know that you have come to observe the birds. If you plan a visit to the meadows, waders or other rubber footwear is a must.

### **How to get there**

The road No. 79 (Warszawa – Kraków-Katowice) is nearby. The best place to turn off is in Nowy Korczyn, where you will need to head for Wiślica, approximately 10 km away. If you are coming from Kielce, take road No. 73 for Chmielnik and Busko Zdrój. In Busko-Zdrój turn for Kazimierza Wielka (road No. 776) and when you get to Wiślica, turn left for Szczerbaków. If you are coming from Kraków, there is an alternative way to the one mentioned above, i.e. road No. 79, as you can follow a local road No. 776 with direction Kazimierza Wielka. In all cases it is easy to find the fishponds, as you can easily spot them from the road.

## Also of interest

The whole area of the Nida River valley is very interesting for birdwatchers. Particularly recommended is a visit (mid-March to mid-May) to the spring-time broads of the Nida River near the villages of Umianowice and Skowronne, as well as an area of marshes near Ostrów. In the winter you can find large congregations of water and wetland birds on the Nida River near Sokołów Dolny. Fishponds in Biechów, about 20 km to the west from the described area are also an interesting birdwatching area.

## Links

- ♦ [www.natura2000.tbop.org.pl/node/57](http://www.natura2000.tbop.org.pl/node/57) – Special Area of Conservation Dolina Nidy within Natura 2000 network (in Polish)

## Literature

- ♦ Maniarski R., Jantarski M., Wilniewczyc P., Zając T. 2010. Dolina Nidy, in: Wilk T., Jujka M., Krogulec J., Chylarecki P. (eds.). *Ostoje ptaków o znaczeniu międzynarodowym w Polsce*. OTOP, Marki. (In Polish with English summaries).

# 69 • Piotr Dębowski

## • Młodzawy Fishponds and adjacent meadows ★

### Location

(50°27'N, 20°32'E) The site is located within the uplands of Central Poland, in the district of Pińczów, near the village of Młodzawy Duże, within the floodplain of the Nida River valley.

### Description

The Młodzawy fishponds are located within the boundaries of Nadnidziański Park Krajobrazowy (landscape park) and they occupy an area of approx. 110 ha. Due to the diversity of the bird species in the Landscape Park, it has been designated as a Natura 2000 Special Protection Areas.

The group consists of 12 fishponds of different sizes which, in the north and south, border on large patches of temporarily flooded cut meadows, and small patches of arable land. In the west it borders on large, well-developed, and at places very boggy alder carr. The east part of the fishponds is located very close to the Nida River bed. Causeways in the proximity of the road are more overgrown with Common Reed than others.

### Birds

It is an important bird site both during breeding and during the spring and autumn migration.