

Dr. Ivo Sanader,
Prime Minister
The Government of the Republic of Croatia
Trg Sv. Marka 2
10000 Zagreb
Croatia



Somewhere on the
African West Coast, April 2005

Sir,

Help! As I have just learned from those brave people who try to protect my home at River Drava, things have become even worse since my last letter. Please help! Did I get it right? Are there really new plans by the Croatian Water Management Authority¹ which foresee the extraction of enormous quantities of sediments from the river? You can imagine, we are really shocked and cannot believe it – **Sir! - this new plan will destroy the last homes of our species, it will lead us close into extinction!!!**

We and our homes - you remember, we are breeding on open sand and gravel banks - are protected according to the Nature Conservation Act in Croatia as well as by the EU Habitats and Birds Directives. What does it mean now; will our government take this serious? **Will our government allow that my home is being sold for 1, 5 to 2 Kuna per cubic meter?**

In the name of my family and my Croatian relatives: please act! As I mentioned in my letter last month: we are not humans, but we are your citizens! And we desperately deserve the help of our government. Your help! Now!

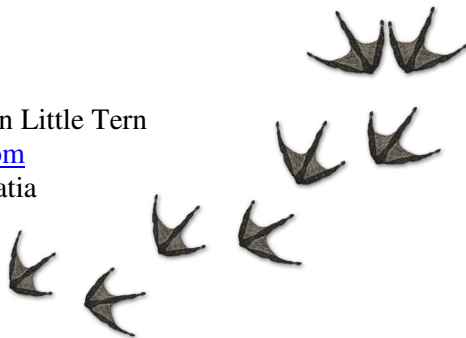
We are more than disappointed that in spite of our recent appeal the destruction of our homes, our beautiful Drava gravel and sand banks is continuing, even accelerating.

With this letter we therefore do not only appeal you and your colleagues as politicians but also environmental organizations and media both at home and abroad. And we ask the all people and the media for their support: we cannot cry out, but you can do it for us!

Please help! We are dramatically endangered! If this new plan is going to be implemented we are closer to extinction than ever before.

I still trust that you will help me.

Best wishes, your citizen Little Tern
mala_cigra@hotmail.com
Repaš, Islands 1-5, Croatia



¹ (Public tender in "Jutarnji list" from 17 March 2005; call for extraction of about 2.000.000 m³ of sediments from the Drava river on 20 locations in the next 3-4 years)



For those who do not know me yet:

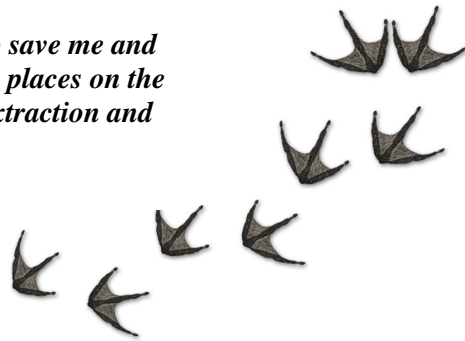
I'm a small, pretty bird - the smallest Tern worldwide. In the good old days, we Little Terns used to be typical breeding river birds in Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary. Hundreds of us flew over the extraordinarily beautiful landscape.

I am not only a pretty, but also a sensitive little bird. I cannot breed on destroyed rivers without gravel and sand banks, or live without appropriate feeding grounds. Throughout Europe there are only three rivers remaining of this kind not destroyed and still offer a suitable habitat for me. The Drava within the border area between Croatia and Hungary is one of them. All the rest has been destroyed by hydropower dams, river regulation and sediment extraction along the river.

This river is my home: I find breeding places on its gravel and sand banks and its shallow water zones, bays and oxbows offer plenty of fish for me and my hungry little ones. I and my friends share the rare breeding places left. New islands formed by the dynamic river mostly on four sites as a string of pearls along the Drava. And now, as I have heard, even these last homes of ours are in danger.

Currently I'm still enjoying the warm weather in Africa, my home during winter. My real home however, where I give birth to my children, is the 50 km long Drava river stretch between Legrad and Ferdinandovac and some places downstream to Osijek. But each year I am scared that on returning from my winter home in May my friends and I may find no place to live anymore!

Again I really beg you to do your utmost to save me and my little ones and protect our last breeding places on the Drava: Please stop any further sediment extraction and river channelling!



This letter goes to: The members of the Croatian government and parliament,
Drava county heads and majors

CC: National and international NGOs, Local and national media in Croatia