

WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE IN HUNGARY

Ramsar Convention: an agreement on wet lands of international importance, in particular waterfowl habitats, adopted in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, which covers 29 Hungarian territories. Only a few of the more significant ones are described here.

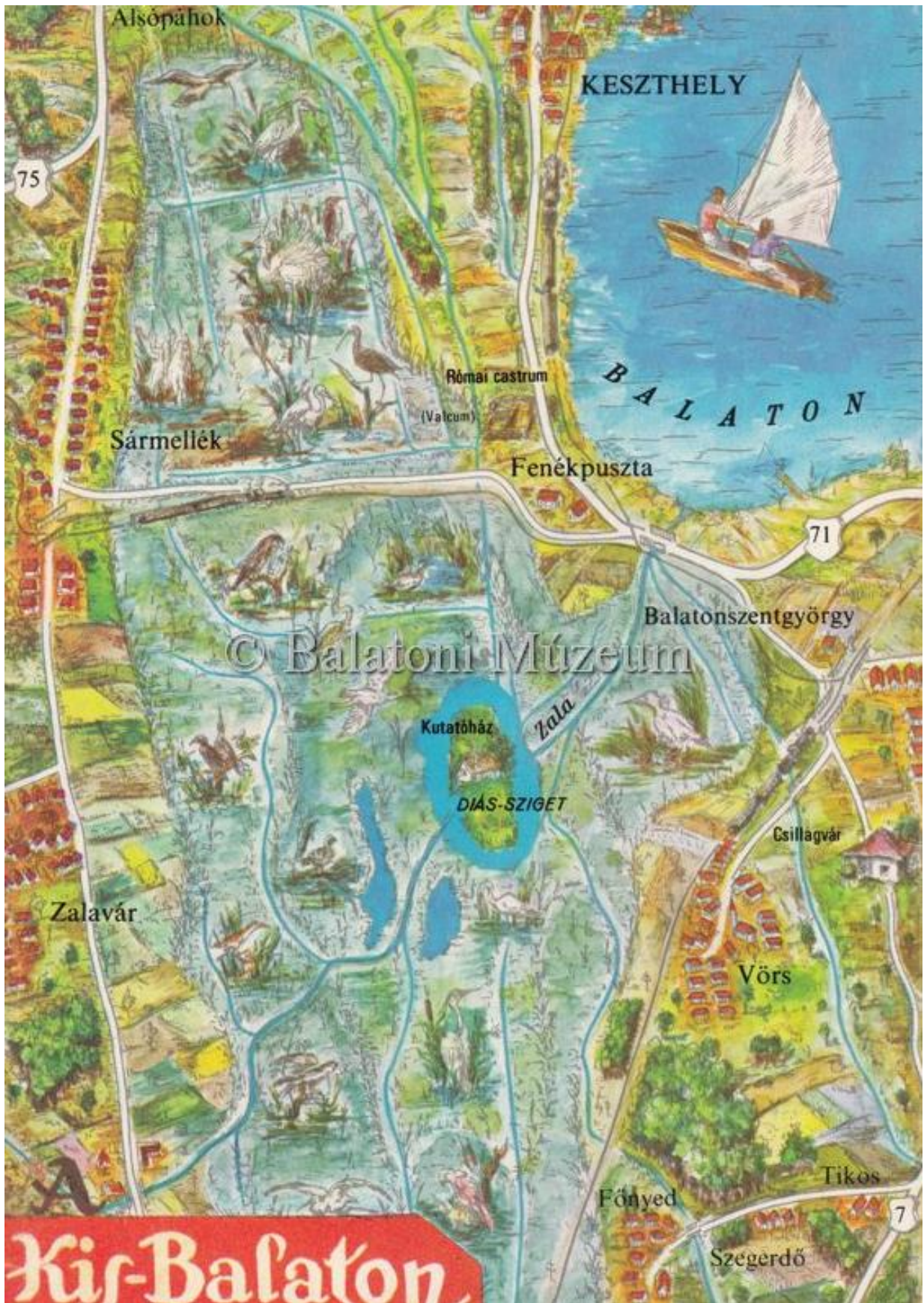


Source: <https://www.ramsar.org/logo-library>

Kis-Balaton (Small Balaton)

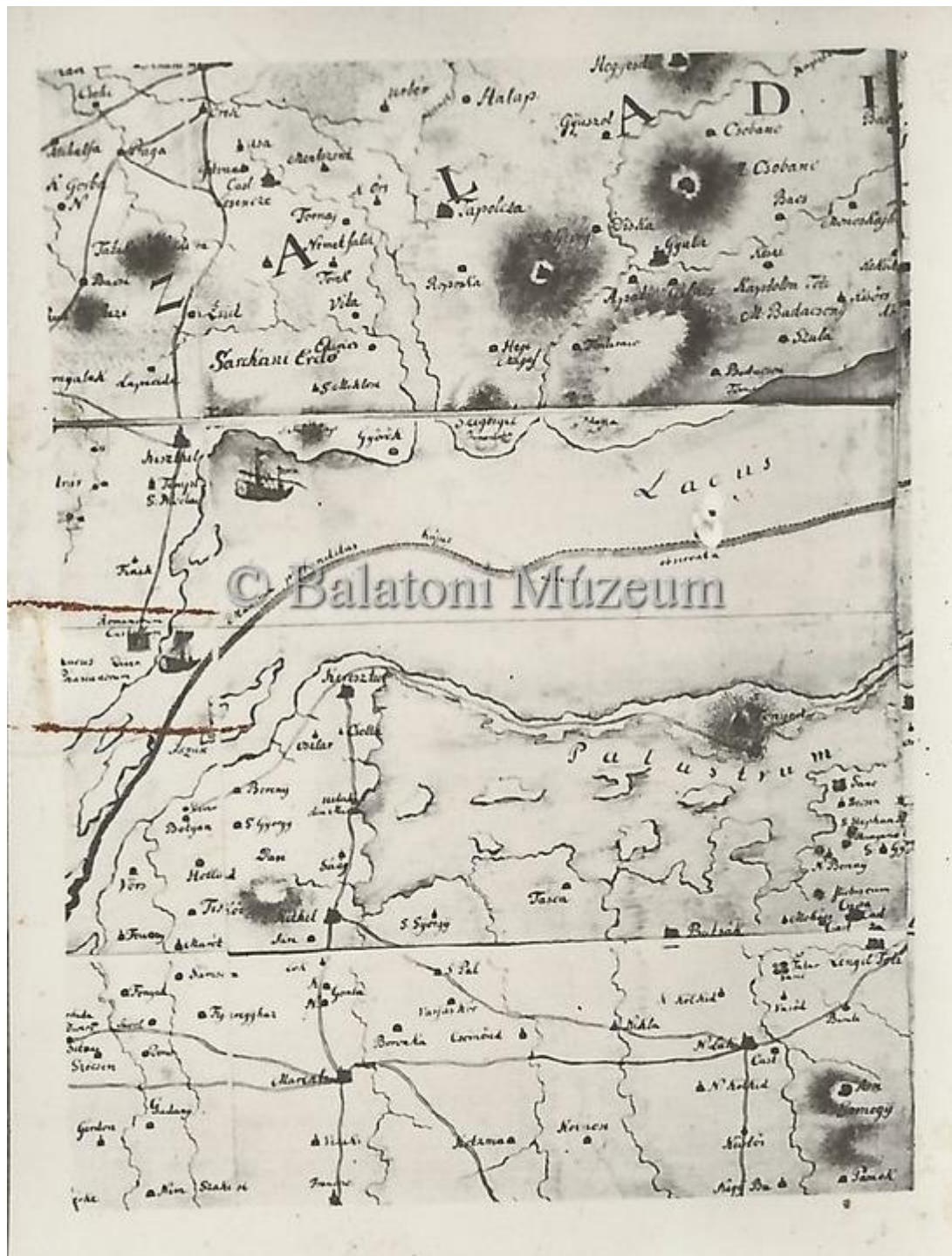
An integral part of Lake Balaton, it was considered its westernmost bay even in the 19th century. It played an important role in retaining the deposits carried by the Zala River, the largest water catchment of Lake Balaton, and in keeping the lake clean. It acted as a natural filter. Continuous human interference and drainage led to the disappearance of this natural water purification system just when it was most needed, in the second half of the 20th century. Pollution of human origin was already directly affecting the Keszthely Bay. Strong algae growth had started and signs of siltation were appearing. Recognising the problem, the Kis-Balaton Water Protection System was developed in two phases. This human intervention was so successful that today the old Kis-Balaton bird life has been revived in this area. Since 1979, it has been a bird habitat and breeding site of international importance, covering 14 659 hectares under the Ramsar Convention.

The number of bird species observed in the protected area exceeds 250, about half of which nest on Kis-Balaton, such as the Montagu's harrier (*Circus pygargus*), the white-tailed eagle, (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), the pygmy cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmeus*) and the great egret (*Egretta alba*).



Map of the Kis-Balaton (Small Balaton)

Source: <https://mandadb.hu/tetel/20464/KisBalaton>



Balaton Map of Mikorinyi

Source: https://mandadb.hu/tetel/219745/Mikorinyi_terkepe_a_Balatonrol

With an area of 59,800 hectares, **Lake Balaton** is the largest freshwater body of still water in Central Europe and has been a Ramsar site since 1989. During the winter migration season, masses of waterfowl rest and feed on the lake. Wintering species such as the greater scaup (*Aythya marila*), the tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*), the common goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), the velvet scoter (*Melanitta fusca*) and the black-throated loon (*Gavia arctica*) can be seen here. Kis-Balaton, the **South Balaton bays and fish ponds** were once part of Lake Balaton. Human interventions have shaped the present picture. The area has been covered

by the Ramsar Convention since 2011. The number of bird species is up to 100. The presence of the highly protected herons (*Ardeidae*) is of particular importance, but the area is also home to one of the largest populations of the pygmy cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmeus*) in Transdanubia.

Lake Fertő

Since 1979, **Lake Fertő** has been a protected area of 8 432 hectares under the Ramsar Convention. Its birdlife includes a significant population of great egrets (*Egretta alba*), but also a considerable number of Eurasian bitterns (*Botaurus stellaris*), greylag geese (*Anser anser*) and Eurasian spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*).

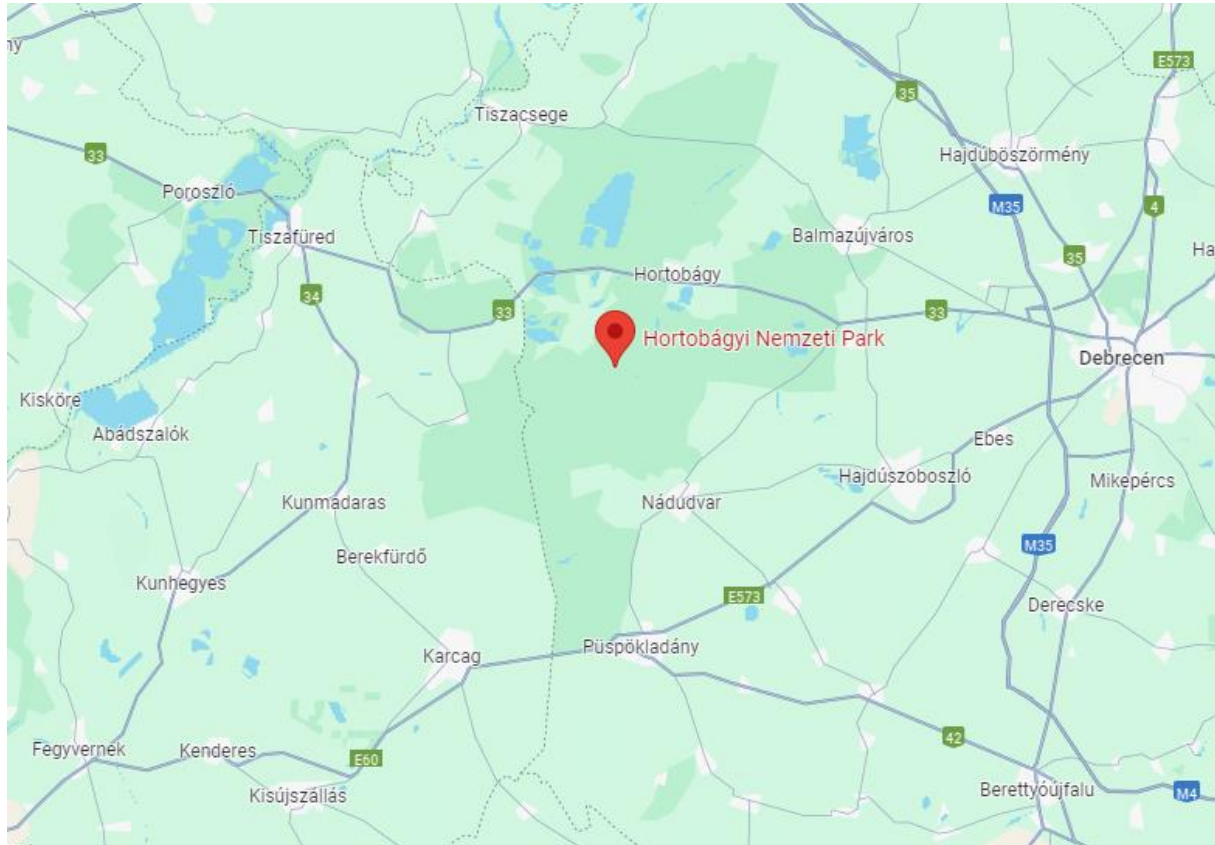


Lake Fertő

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/>

Hortobágy National Park

32 037 hectares of the **Hortobágy** National Park are covered by the Ramsar Convention. The national park itself is symbolised by the common crane (*Grus grus*) performing its mating dance but the nationally rare saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*) can also be seen in the area. In winter, you can also see snow bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) and common linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*) in Hortobágy.

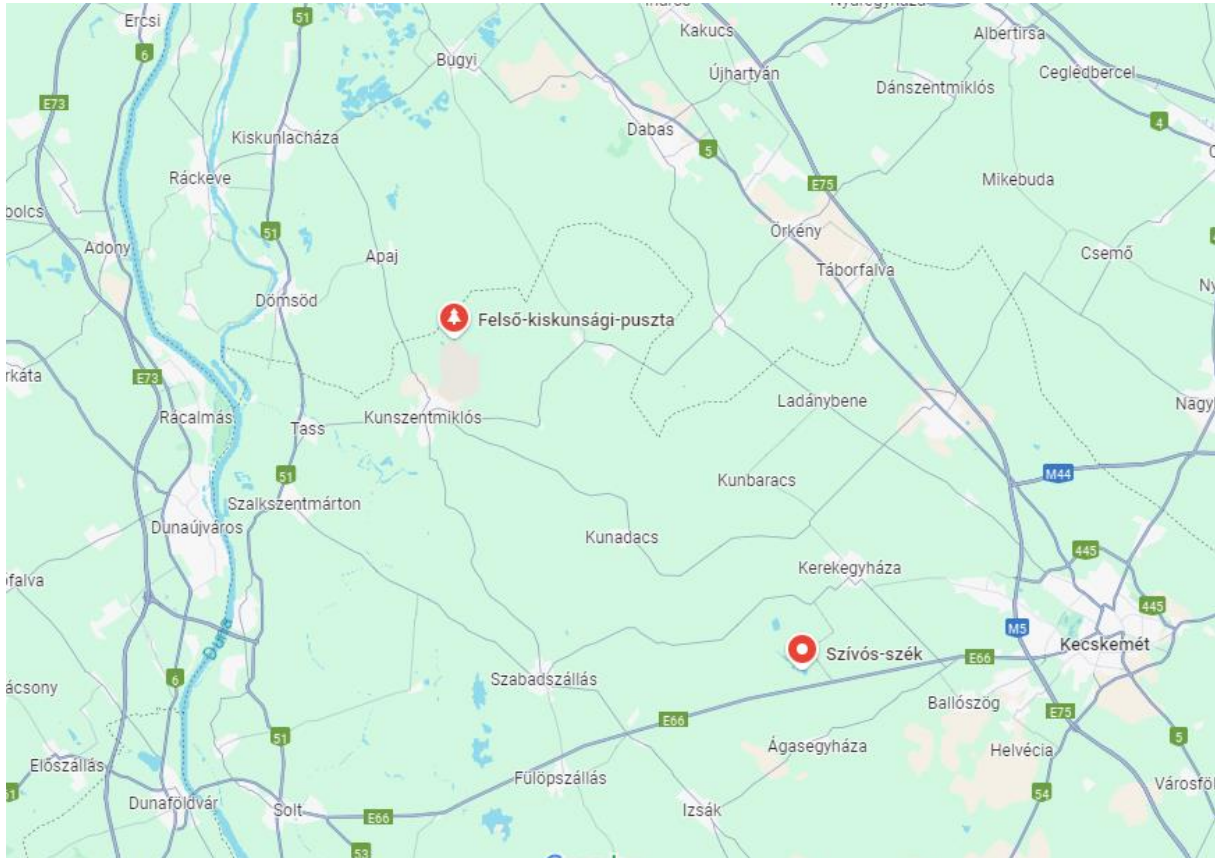


Hortobágy

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/>

Felső-Kiskunság salt lakes

The Ramsar site of **Felső-Kiskunság salt lakes** covers an area of 7393.8 hectares. One of the interesting birds of these wetlands is the ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), but the most common species in the autumn bird gatherings are the greater white-fronted geese and the greylag geese. In years with good water conditions, up to 300 pairs of pied avocets (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) may be found in the area.



Felső-Kiskunság salt lakes

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/>

Gemenc

One of Europe's largest contiguous flood plain is in **Gemenc**, along the Danube, in the Sárköz. The Ramsar site of almost 20,000 hectares is connected to the south by the Béda-Karapanca, an area of approximately 7,000 hectares, also covered by the Convention. The special birds of particular interest here are the common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), the black stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and the black kite (*Milvus migrans*). The area is home to Hungary's largest population of white-tailed eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*).

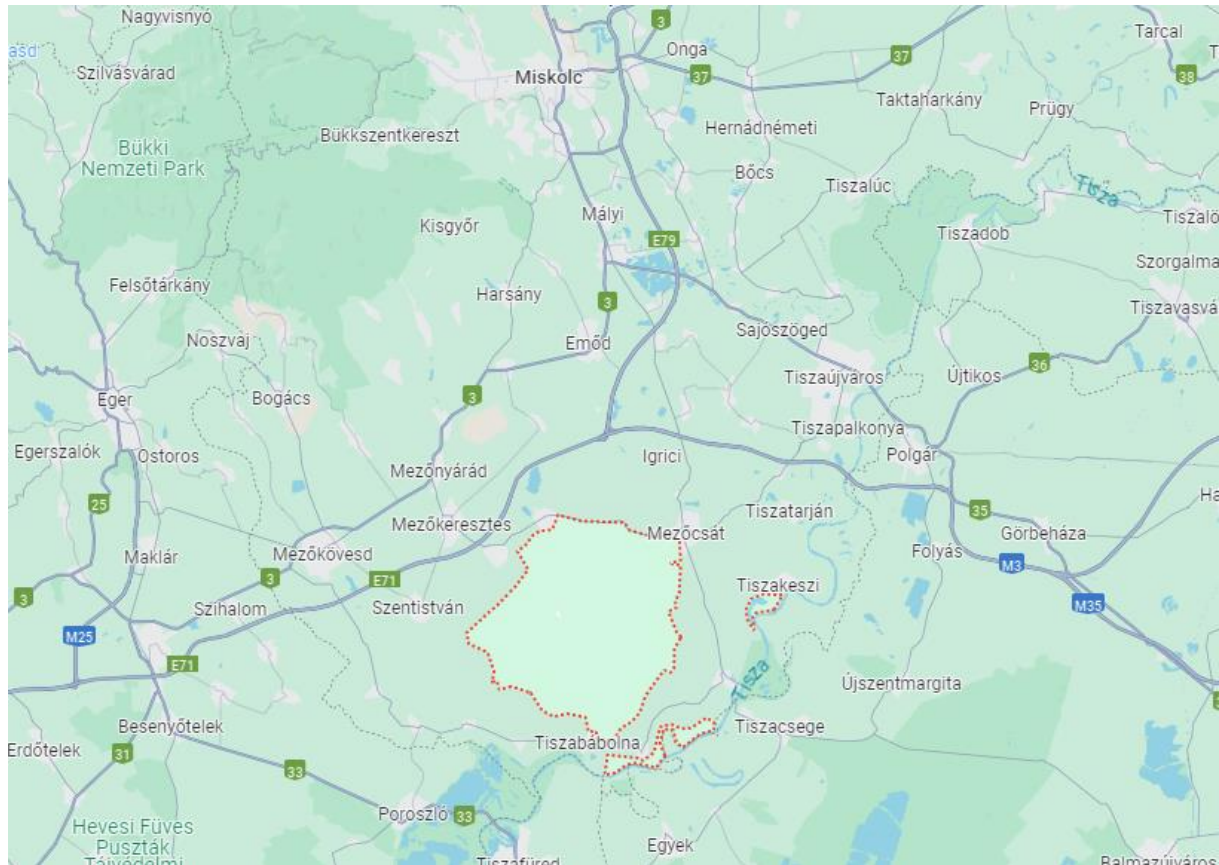


Gemenc

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/>

Borsodi-Mezőség

The Ramsar site of 18 470.9 hectares of the **Borsodi-Mezőség**, between the Great Plain and the Bükk Mountains, is home to a very rich birdlife. A significant population of great bustards (*Otis tarda*) nest in the area, but also corn crane (*Crex crex*) and Eurasian stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*) can be seen here. The Montagu's harrier (*Circus pygargus*) and the eastern imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) are often observed in the region.



Borsodi-Mezőség

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/>