



**Closer  
to Nature**

## PRESS RELEASE

### Lačnov's saffrons usher in the spring season

(Lačnov, 19. 4. 2013) Tens of thousands of saffrons (*crocus albiflorus*) come to bloom around Lačnov in East Moravia toward the end of March. Earlier today, the Czech Union for Nature Conservation and its general partner, NET4GAS, unveiled information boards in this locality.

"During the period when saffron is in bloom, a large number of tourists make Lačnov the destination of their trips. But many of them know very little about saffron, its history, the fact that it is a protected plant, and the importance of protecting it," says Milan Orálek from the Union's branch in Valašské Meziříčí. The initiative to install information boards in a locality with a large population of saffrons is a part of the jointly administered "NET4GAS Closer to Nature" program.

"The main goals of the Closer to Nature program, which we've pursued together with the Czech Union for Nature Conservation for the last seven years, are being closer to nature, getting to know its beauty, and, at the same time, learning how to care for it and protect it. Lačnov is the 56<sup>th</sup> locality on the list of nature sites made accessible thanks to our program," explains NET4GAS's Promotion Specialist Zuzana Kučerová.

In the context of Czech flora, saffron (*crocus albiflorus*) is an exotic plant whose journey to Czech Lands remains surrounded by mystery. We know that its origins are in Southern Europe, but a plausible explanation how the plant got as far as Wallachia is yet to be provided. Old legends suggest that saffron seeds fell from carriages carrying hay used by Napoleon's armies as fodder for horses.

Be it as it may, the presence of saffron so far away from its original habitat is so unique that an area in Lačnov was declared a natural heritage site in the 1940s. According to a count taken in the spring of 2012, as many as 35 thousand saffrons bloom on a meadow in Lačnov's center near the local elementary school every year. Another spot declared natural heritage site because of a large saffron population (13 thousand saffron plants) is Sucháčkovy paseky [Sucháček's Clearings], an attractive destination for walking trips located southwest from Lačnov. The third site, which features a population of close to 14 thousand saffrons and is relatively unknown to the public, is inside an old orchard on Lačnov's western outskirts. Thanks to the keen interest of its owners, the locality is expected to be declared a natural heritage site soon.

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The Czech Union for Nature Conservation is a civic association of people who share an active interest in nature conservation and the environment. ČSOP's mission is to protect and restore nature, the landscape and the environment, to promote environmental education and support sustainable living. The Union currently has 9,000 members coming from the ranks of professional naturalists, experienced volunteers as well as pure enthusiasts who simply love nature. For more information please go to [www.csop.cz](http://www.csop.cz).

NET4GAS is aware of its social responsibility and therefore develops and constantly deepens its concept of corporate philanthropy and sponsorship. The company acts as a reliable and safe gas transmission system operator and develops a responsible environmental policy that takes into account the interests of future generations. The NET4GAS long-term strategy - which is put into practice through the NET4GAS Closer to Nature programme - springs from the close relation between the core business pursued by NET4GAS on the one hand, and nature-conservation and environmental issues on the other. NET4GAS is the general partner of the Czech Union for Nature Conservation since 2007 and supports other projects for which the motto "Closer to Nature" represents an integral part of sustainable development. For detailed information on the localities newly opened to the public and on other nature spots of interest, as well as for destination tips, please visit [www.closetonature.cz](http://www.closetonature.cz).