



natura 2000

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Theme of this issue: BIODIVERSITY



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Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010

Sustaining biodiversity in Europe

In 2001, EU Heads of State and Government committed to the ambitious target of halting the loss of biodiversity in Europe by the year 2010. This is established as an objective of both the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development and the Sixth Environmental Action Programme. The European Council has repeatedly urged accelerated action in this regard, most recently at its meeting of 9 March 2006. EU Heads of State and Government also joined some 130 world leaders at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in 2002 in making a commitment to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010.

This issue of the Natura 2000 Newsletter examines the measures that are being taken to meet the commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity in the EU by 2010. It reports on ongoing and recent initiatives, at policy level as well as in the field. We take a look at the integration of biodiversity into sectors such as agricultural and development

policies, and appraise some initiatives taken by the business sector to integrate biodiversity concerns into their operations and strategies. We also highlight the European Commission's LIFE-Nature programme, and its achievements in protecting and managing Natura 2000 areas and the species and habitats for which the network is designated.



The Natura 2000 Newsletter is produced by the LIFE and Nature Conservation Units of the Environment Directorate General (DG ENV) of the European Commission. This newsletter is produced twice a year and is available in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian.

Recent years have seen a number of new initiatives on biodiversity, and a renewed focus on the 2010 biodiversity target as the deadline approaches. In 2003, the Commission initiated with Member States and civil society a far-ranging review of implementation, effectiveness and appropriateness of EU biodiversity policy. This culminated in a stakeholder conference convened in Malahide, Ireland by the Irish Presidency and the Commission in May 2004. The conference outcome, the "Message from Malahide", achieved an unprecedented degree of consensus on what the EU needs to do to meet its 2010 commitments (read more on page 10). The Council subsequently called on the Commission to report on the progress made so far, taking into account the findings of the policy review and in particular the Message from Malahide. The Commission is expected to respond within the next few months with a "Communication on Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010 – and Beyond". A public web consultation on the Communication resulted in overwhelming support for the Commission's proposed approach. This is expected to centre on an "EU Action Plan to 2010 and Beyond", containing actions and targets to address a small set of priority objectives and supporting measures.



A world of discovery - love for nature begins in childhood. © LIFE99 NAT/F/006321

To help kick-start implementation of the Communication, this year's Green Week will be dedicated to the theme of biodiversity. The conference programme will be structured around four main themes:

1. Biodiversity: a global issue, 2. Managing natural resources, 3. Space for nature and 4. Biodiversity and society. It will be flanked by a wide range of side events and will gather speakers and participants from all areas of society, including decision makers from Member States and the EU, school children, NGOs, nature managers, businesses and speakers from outside Europe (see programme on the back cover).

Natura 2000 towards 2010

As part of the Malahide objectives, the Member States and the Commission set the target to complete the Natura 2000

network on land by 2005, to designate marine sites by 2008, and to set out and instigate management objectives for all Natura 2000 sites by 2010. Although the goal to complete the network on land by 2005 was not reached, good progress has been made. In the EU25, the classification of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds is now largely complete. The designation of Sites of Community Interest (SCIs) in the EU15 is almost finalised while the completeness of the SCIs is still to be determined for the EU10. In the EU15, the lists of proposed Sites of Community Interest (pSCIs) in the Atlantic and Continental regions were adopted in 2005 and an assessment of Mediterranean regional progress is scheduled for adoption in early 2006. In the EU10, the biogeographical seminars, during which proposed SCIs are to be assessed for their relevance by a scientific panel and the Commission, are expected to be completed by May 2006.

The black woodpecker (Dryocopus martius) is one of the many bird species benefiting from Natura 2000. © Arge NATURSCHUTZ-LIFE00 NAT/A/007055



When all Member States fulfil their obligations, an estimated 18 % of the total EU25 land territory will be covered by Natura 2000 sites¹.

Nicholas Hanley
Head of Nature and Biodiversity Unit,
DG Environment, European
Commission

¹ Natura 2000 sites include both SCIs and SPAs. An area can be designated as both SCI and SPA if it holds valuable habitats as well as being an important area for birds of community interest.

Biological diversity, commonly referred to as “biodiversity”, is defined in the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as the variability among living organisms from all sources including, amongst other, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part. This includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems. (Art. 2 of the CBD, 1992)

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Strengthening the global framework for action – the convention on biological diversity

States have both the sovereign right to exploit their own resources and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States. However, the protection of biodiversity also transcends national boundaries.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) contains few directly enforceable provisions. The Convention’s decision-making body – the Conference of the Parties (COP) – has adopted a wide range of work programmes, guidelines and other measures to create a global framework for national and regional action. The CBD addresses the biodiversity of the world’s main habitat types (forests, agricultural land, dry and sub-humid lands, oceans and coastal areas, inland waters, mountains and islands), and also “cross-cutting” issues, such as protected areas, access and benefit sharing, incentives, and invasive species. Ten years after the Rio Earth Summit, the Sixth Meeting of the COP to the CBD (COP6) met in The Hague, in 2002, and adopted the Convention’s Strategic Plan. This plan aims to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss globally by 2010, a target which was endorsed at the

2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) was adopted by the parties to the CBD in 2002. It regulates the transboundary movements of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in order to protect biodiversity and human health. The Biosafety Protocol is based on the precautionary principle, and seeks to reconcile trade with environmental protection. It was ratified by the EU on 27 August 2002, and it came into force on 11 September 2003.

The Eighth Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP8) and the Third Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (MOP3),

have been held in March 2006 in Curitiba, Brazil. Fourteen years after Rio, the CBD returned “back home” to Brazil. The meeting took stock on progress made towards the 2010 target and strengthened the CBD’s ability to increase global action towards implementing the CBD and CPB provisions. “Protecting biodiversity is one of the four priorities of the EU’s environmental policy and a key part of the EU approach has been to integrate biodiversity concerns into all aspects of environmental legislation”, DG Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said. The EU substantially contributed towards a successful COP8 and MOP3 and is fully committed to ensure a better global governance to support national and regional action.

The European Community and all its Member States are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The CBD originated from the Conference on Environment and Development, which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – the Rio ‘Earth Summit’. The CBD is made up of 42 Articles which set out a programme to reconcile economic development with the need to preserve the biological diversity of genes, species and ecosystems. CBD Article 1 states its objectives as the following:

- the conservation of biological diversity;
- the sustainable use of its components; and
- the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.



Why does biodiversity matter?

Biodiversity matters for a range of reasons, from its role in regulating natural processes, and its provision of essential products, through to its contribution to our economy, health and general sense of well-being.

Ethically, we have a responsibility to preserve biodiversity for future generations and for the intrinsic value it represents. For example, since we cannot be certain of how our needs will change, we cannot say when we will need biodiversity components in the future, however irrelevant those components may seem today. Maintaining biodiversity will

keep our options open for future use by present and future generations, as for example in the case of medical products. To many people, biodiversity also has an intrinsic value. Biodiversity has evolved over 3,000 million years, it is the condition for continuous evolution, and should not simply be viewed for its usefulness to humans but as a part of a whole and unique system.

Emotionally, biodiversity and nature support our cultural identity, offer spiritual inspiration and solace and, perhaps for these reasons, play an important role in establishing group identification. Seven out of 10 EU citizens confirmed in a recent Eurobarometer survey (2005) that the state of the environment influences their quality of life. Research has



Aster sorrentini is restricted in its world-wide distribution to eight sites in Sicily. LIFE is preserving such vulnerable endemic species by local stakeholders implementing sustainable land management practices.
© Michele Lischi

LIFE saves biodiversity in Sicily

Over the years, the LIFE-Nature programme has supported a large number of projects aiming to conserve rare and threatened species. Like all islands in the Mediterranean, Sicily harbours an elevated number of endemic plants, which are found nowhere else in the world. A recent LIFE project has developed management actions for protecting such vulnerable plants in a volcanic area in South-western Sicily. The project targets the delicate *Aster sorrentini*, a small plant of the daisy family, and such elusive habitats as Mediterranean salt meadows, temporary ponds and steppe grasslands. Protecting these areas can only be successful by involving local stakeholders, farmers and livestock breeders for developing and implementing sustainable management practices in the area. LIFE helps here improving the economic situation of the area: six new jobs are necessary for the management of the sites. Visitors' and educational facilities will boost the eco-tourist business and awareness amongst local people and tourists.



Project reference: LIFE04 NAT/IT/000182
Web site: www.macalife.it

confirmed that nature and biodiversity have a positive effect on human health and mental balance. We obtain a sense of spirituality, joy – or utility – from varied nature experiences. Where green areas are available locally in cities, social cohesion amongst citizens tends to be higher and crime rates are lower. People who access nature frequently also tend to be more mentally balanced. They are inclined to cope better with stress and are less often ill. Children who have a view or access to nature, are likely to develop significantly higher learning abilities than children who do not. A similar result has been found for hospitalised people who tend to recover faster if

they can access nature, or see nature from their hospital window.

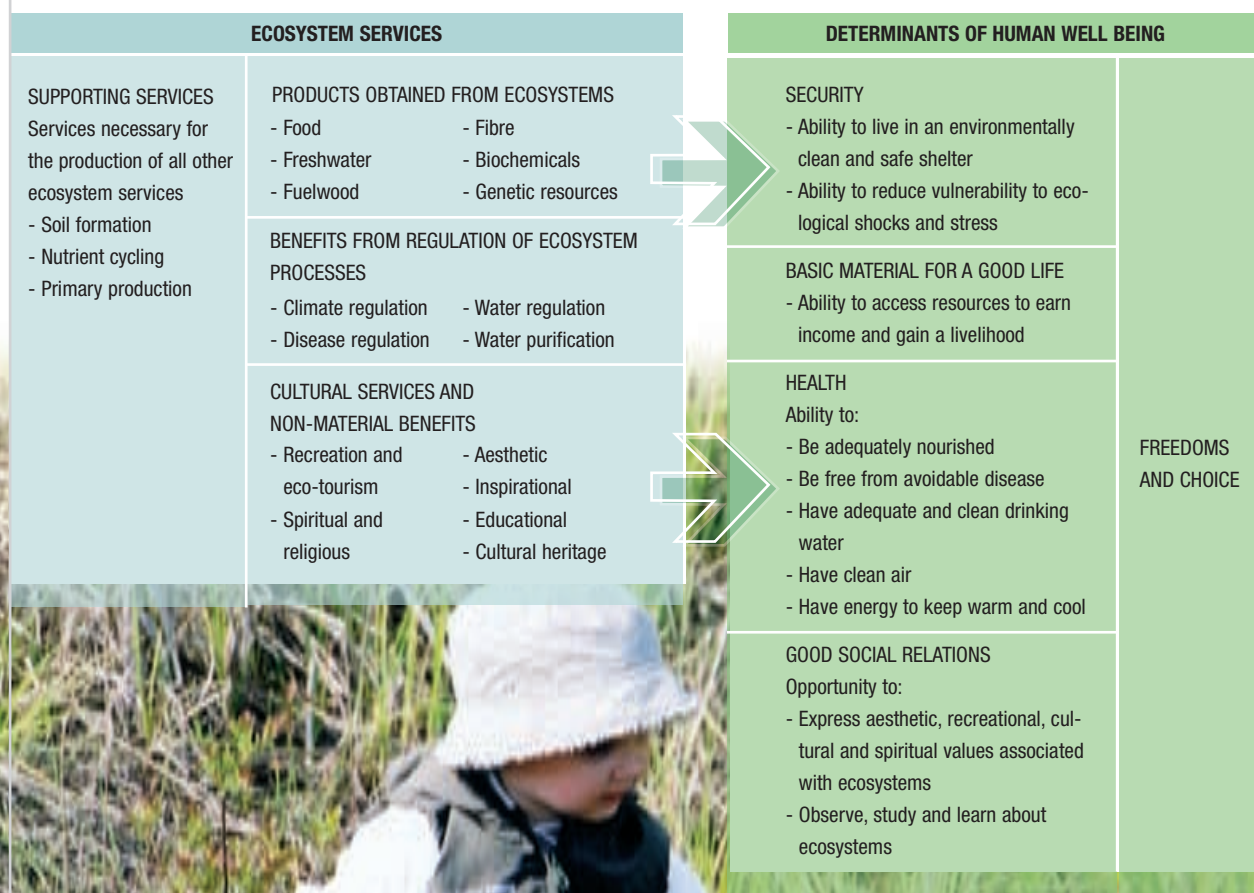
Environmentally, biodiversity underpins the dynamics and functionality of ecosystems, which are vital for ensuring the availability of such critical life-sustaining commodities as food, clean air and water.

Biodiversity and nature have important roles in soil formation, climate and disease regulation and regulation of water resources. For example, flood events in Europe have increased dramatically since the late 1970s, from less than five recorded incidents between 1900 and 1970, to more than 10 incidents annually during the last 10 years, with

a peak of 35 floods recorded by the EEA in the year 2000. The effects are aggravated by the disappearance of natural buffers such as wetlands, bogs and peatlands that have a high water retention capacity. In many cases due to lack of natural buffers, or the increasing pressure on existing systems, the economic impacts of weather and climate related disasters in Europe have reached a cost of between €15 billion and €25 billion annually in 1999-2003.

While little is still known about the functions of most species and the impact they have on the functioning and adaptability of a given ecosystem, new research shows that when longer

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND THEIR LINKS TO HUMAN WELL-BEING



Source: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment



Modern cowboys manage bovines and biodiversity.

© LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083

time periods and larger areas are considered, a higher diversity is needed to ensure the stability of ecosystem functions. To cope with the threat of climate change, high levels of biodiversity are increasingly important to ensure ecosystems' adaptability and hence sustain the flow of benefits from our natural environment.

Economically, biodiversity is one of the main drivers of innovation. It is estimated, for example, that 75% of all medicines are derived from plants, animals or microbotic organisms. Biodiversity underpins a wide range of support functions, such as water

and nutrient regulation, for example ensuring clean drinking water, which would otherwise have to be produced, using expensive chemical cleaning procedures. It provides the genetic resources that are the basis of agricultural development and the source of resilience of crops and livestock to pests and diseases. Biodiversity also directly affects gross national product (GNP) as an input in the production of consumer products and by influencing prices. For example, house prices vary with proximity to nature and some people are willing to pay higher prices for sustainably produced products, such as food, clothing, timber


and furniture, to ensure the preservation of biodiversity.

It is estimated that of the 1,200-1,300 endemic plants used commercially in Europe, 90% (20,000-30,000 tonnes/year) are collected in the wild. The availability of non-wood forest products (NWFP), such as mushrooms, nuts and berries increases with the level of biodiversity in a forest. The MEDFOREX study on Mediterranean Forest Externalities estimated that, in 1994, the total economic value of traditional NWFP in Italian forests alone amounted to €326 million, which accrue to forest owners, authorities (for licences) and private users. If the value of the ecosystem services, recreation as well as negative externalities, such as erosion or increased fire risk were included, the estimate of total economic value of these forests increased to €1.6 billion. A further €441 million was obtained from timber and wood products in Italy in 1994.

Other examples from around the world demonstrate that greater benefits can be obtained by restoring or maintaining biodiversity and ecosystems than converting the land for other purposes. On the other side of the Atlantic, New York City invested about \$1.5 billion to protect and restore a watershed in the Catskill Mountains that provides freshwater to the city. The alternative of building a filtration plant would have been about 5-6 times higher, plus operational costs of about \$300 million/year. In China, the remaining forests in the upper Yangtze River catchment area have been estimated to be 10 times as valuable left standing compared to if they were cut for timber, because they help control flooding.

Nature generating income and employment

In Belgium, a concerted action was initiated to establish a National Park at Hoge Kempen (initiated by Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland vzw), with the complementary use of regional and state funds and European Structural Funds. Based on experiences from similar areas in the region, the Park Administration estimates that the Park, which covers 5,800 ha, is expected to attract about 700,000 visitors annually and greatly contribute to the local economy by generating an additional yearly income of €24.5 million to the region after five years. With the given investments, the region should be making a net surplus about 10 years after the opening of the Park.

 **Web site:** www.nationaalparkhoge Kempen.be



On a similar note, a recent study by the German Ministry of Environment shows that employment opportunities were significantly enhanced around three large Natura 2000 areas in Germany (Müritz, Hoher Fläming and Altmühltal) due to tourism development and production and sale of local products.

The study can be requested free of charge from the German "Bundesamt für Naturschutz" web site: www.bfn.de

Taking a bike... is a great way to experience nature or, as here, to share experiences on the management of nature areas. © LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083

Threats to European biodiversity

Despite current efforts, many species and habitats in Europe remain threatened or are declining. According to the European Environment State and Outlook (European Environment Agency 2005), 43% of European birds have an unfavourable conservation status, 12% of our 576 butterfly species are very rare or declining rapidly, and around 600 plant species are considered extinct in the wild or critically endangered, while 45% of our reptiles and 52% of our freshwater fish are threatened.

The main pressures on biodiversity in the EU, as identified in the European Environment State and Outlook, are land use practices and changes in land use, alien species, and climate change. The problems of pollution, and resource use/consumption and over-exploitation are also important threats.

On a global level, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) considers that these five pressures on biodiversity assert a continued or rapidly increasing impact on all habitats types, with the exception of temperate forests, where a decreasing impact in terms of "habitat change/land use change" has been noted. One of the key underlying drivers of these pressures is that markets often fail to incorporate the benefits from nature and biodiversity in decision making. These market failures can make developers take decisions that are not necessarily optimal for society as a whole.

The choice of land management methods is a key element in maintaining biodiversity.
© LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083



Changes in land use

In the EU in recent years, the largest losses of habitats and ecosystems were recorded in heath, scrub and tundra, wetland mires, bogs and fens. These losses are largely due to human activities such as draining, building of dams, and abandonment of traditional land use methods. Freshwater ecosystems were also subject to substantial modifications due, amongst other reasons, to extensive damming for hydroelectric power and the reinforcement of riverbanks. Since 1993, Europe has seen a loss of 10% in its wetland area alone.

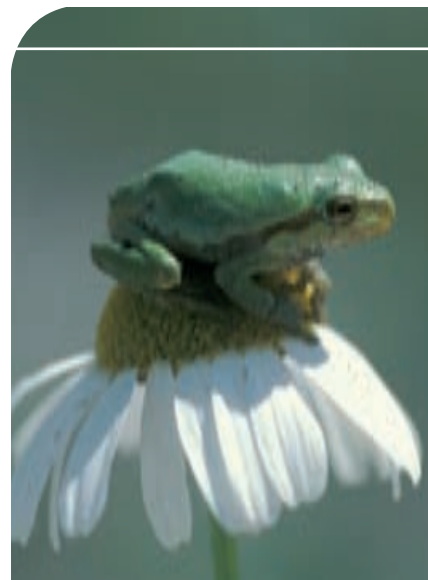
About half of the EU's landmass is farmland, which is of great importance to wildlife and habitats both outside and within protected areas. Fifty per cent of all species in Europe depend on agricultural habitats, especially those maintained by traditional farming practices such as hay meadows, wet and dry grasslands, moorlands and heathlands. Such semi-natural habitats currently only cover 15-25% of the European countryside and are rapidly disappearing.

Although the Common Agricultural Policy has undergone some reform, the financial instrument will continue for years to come to encourage the intensification of agriculture, monocultures, and large scale farming. Intensive agriculture increases the need for

and use of pesticides and fertilisers, which contribute to nutrification, soil and water degradation, and subsequent loss of species and habitats. Abandonment of marginal areas such as wet meadows and mountain pastures are also likely to continue due to general economic development and replacement by other activities such as tourism (skiing and beach resorts), and the abandonment of family/small scale agriculture that support such marginal areas. For example, about 30% of Estonia's farmland is currently out of production, making it prone to invasion by shrubs and opportunistic species that subsequently replace the biodiversity rich semi-natural habitats.

The tree frog Hyla arborea is suffering from fragmentation and loss of his habitats due to changes in land use.

© Arge NATURSCHUTZ-LIFE00 NAT/A/007055



Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010

Managing endangered habitats with traditional breeds of cattle

The valuable resource of locally adapted livestock species is currently diminishing rapidly with about 50% of the traditional breeds in the EU15 extinct or dying out. The Yorkshire Dales Limestone Country project, supported by LIFE-Nature, aims to restore the quality of natural limestone pavement areas and improve conditions for the rare flora found in these habitats by reinstating the use of traditional breeds of hardy cattle. The targeted terrain is very rough and the more delicate breeds of cattle used in intensive agricultural production would not be able to survive here without supplementary feeding. The approach also offers a potential additional income to the local farmers from high quality beef production.



Project reference: LIFE02 NAT/UK/008539

Web site: www.limestone-country.org.uk

The lack of appropriate incentives to continue these biodiversity-friendly practices is often at the root of this abandonment. On a positive note, the share of organic farming has been increasing since the 1980s. Organic farming has been documented to benefit biodiversity, as well as water and soil conservation.

Urban sprawl and infrastructure development continue to threaten biodiversity by fragmenting landscapes and covering them with concrete. During the 1990s an area of 800,000 ha in Europe was covered by asphalt and concrete. This corresponds to an increase of 5% in the built-up area of Europe. This trend is expected to continue, due in large part to construction work in the EU10.

Invasive alien species

Invasive alien species pose a significant and mounting threat to biodiversity in Europe. They generally cause significant damage to biodiversity by changing the natural dynamics of systems, often without encountering natural enemies. Observed effects include

Zebra mussels (Dreissena polymorpha) cluster on any hard surface. Outside their natural range, they can be detrimental to life in lakes and cause economic losses.
© Daniel Renders

the driving out of native species and genetic contamination by interbreeding. This can lead to the destruction of ecosystems, and reductions in profits from affected economic activities. For example, the introduction of Zebra mussels to North American and European freshwater systems has contributed to the extinction of more than 19 freshwater species, including fish species and other types of mussels. The mussel's colonisation pattern also damages water intake structures, such as in power and water treatment plants, and has caused an estimated loss of about €100 million annually to European and American industries.

Deliberate introductions of alien species - such as exotic garden plants and tree species, and released pets - are as widespread as accidental introductions that mainly happen through the escape of species bred in captivity, and through the transportation of goods in lorries or ships.

Climate change

Climate change is beginning to have impacts on various sensitive ecosystems. In the Arctic, higher temperatures have already increased the variety of plants found in lakes and it is expected that some endemic species will be lost as a result. In the Alps, glaciers are retreating at an unprecedented rate, forcing cold-loving plants to retreat higher and to compete with new species migrating from below. One study referred to in the European



Great horizons for the highlanders reinstated by the UK LIFE-Nature project.
© LIFE02 NAT/UK/008539

Environment State and Outlook (EEA 2005) suggest that a 1°C rise in temperature will cause the extinction of 40% of endemic plants in the Alps, while a 5°C rise would result in a 97% loss.

In the future, drought and increased wild fire intensity are expected to have severe impacts on biodiversity in the Mediterranean where ecosystems are already close to their climatic limits. At the same time, changes to sea temperature are expected to impact on Mediterranean wetlands in particular, placing increased pressure on biodiversity in that region.

Pollution

In Europe, the threat to biodiversity from pollution, especially from the use of nitrates in intensive agriculture, remains a major concern. About 70% of our ecosystems are currently exposed to excess levels of eutrophication and this level is expected to persist in the coming years. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment also foresees a rapidly increasing impact from nitrogen and phosphorous pollution globally and on all types of ecosystems.

In 1991, the European Commission introduced the Nitrates Directive¹. Although significant progress has

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¹ Directive 91/676/EEC concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources

been made in recent years in many Member States, the implementation of the Nitrates Directive still remains patchy. For example, although 25% of the monitored European rivers have shown a decline in nitrate concentrations, around 15% have shown an increase. Peoples' well-being, as well as that of biodiversity, would benefit from a more rigid implementation of the Nitrates Directive; experience from the UK shows that it is much cheaper to prevent nitrates from entering into the system than filtering nitrates from the water to make it fit for drinking.

Resource consumption and over-exploitation

It is estimated that Europeans use about three times as many natural resources as our planet can provide per person. Consumption of food and drink, housing, personal travel and mobility (transport), and tourism are issues with particularly large or increasing negative impacts on the environment. The 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment confirms that we have made unprecedented changes to ecosystems and biodiversity in recent decades, to meet growing demands for food, fresh water, fibre, and energy.

This pattern of consumption is unsustainable. On average, the sustainability of about 50% of the fish stocks in European seas has been assessed, although in the Mediterranean this assessment only covers around 20% of stocks. Of the assessed stocks, between 20-53% are considered outside sustainable biological limits (for a more detailed account, see the European Environment State and Outlook, EEA 2005).

In Europe and globally, policy focus on sustainable consumption and production is rising, but impacting on personal behaviour will be a major challenge in the near future. In a recent

Eurobarometer survey, European citizens revealed that private consumption was one of their lowest concerns amongst environmental pressures.

Market failures

In many cases, altered or converted habitats and ecosystems would have provided much higher benefits if they had not been converted. Decision making however often gives priority to private gain rather than benefits that would accrue to society in general. If the decision maker is a private entity, they may personally gain more from a conversion. This is because benefits to society are rarely internalised in decision making unless there is a mechanism that demands compensation for society, or if society is willing to pay for a specific type of management (e.g. organically grown food). An example is one of Canada's most productive farmland areas, which is located on drained wetland. A study revealed that benefits from conserving the wetland would present a 60% increase in net benefits to society (e.g. from sustainable hunting and fishing) compared with the benefits obtained by private landowners. Attempts to internalise such "market failures" are difficult. However, approaches include plac-



Free-flowing rivers are delivering important benefits to society (e.g. fish resources and flood retention).

© Marco Fritz

ing monetary values on nature and biodiversity and including these in cost-benefit analyses and environmental impact assessments. However, while ecosystem services are relatively easy to price, many of the other benefits derived from nature and biodiversity – option values for future generations, for example – are less tangible and difficult to estimate.

From garden pride to island pest

The island of Minorca boasts a large and interesting plant community, which includes eight species listed in the Habitats Directive, four of which are considered as priorities. This unique and diverse island plant community was severely threatened by the invasion of an alien plant, *Carpobrotus edulis*, imported from South Africa and planted in gardens where it was valued for its colourful flowers. LIFE-Nature supported a project that aimed to stop the plant spreading uncontrollably throughout the island, wiping out the natural flora on its way. The project successfully eradicated the alien plant from almost the entire island and sensitised the local population to the problem. As a result of the project, the local authorities are now considering listing *Carpobrotus edulis* as a pest.



Project reference: LIFE00 NAT/E/007355
Web site: <http://www.cime.es/lifeflora/sp/portada.asp>

Carpobrotus edulis – adored for its pretty flower but fatal for natural vegetation in Minorca.
© LIFE00 NAT/E/007355



© Juan Perez Lorenzo

Reaching 2010 and beyond

The year 2006 promises a wide range of initiatives that will increase the focus on halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. The European Commission is finalising its Communication on Biodiversity, taking into account the “Message from Malahide”; Member States are expected to finalise the designation of Natura 2000 sites while the financing of the Network is being discussed as part of the new EU Financial Perspectives; and Green Week 2006 will focus on biodiversity.

In May 2004, the Irish Presidency with the Commission brought together experts from key sectors affecting biodiversity in a large stakeholder conference in Malahide, Ireland, to consider the findings of a number of reviews of biodiversity policies in the EU. The conference achieved an unprecedented degree of consensus on what needs to be done to meet the 2010 target. This consensus was expressed in the “Message from Malahide” which contains 18 priority objectives. These 18 objectives relate both to dedicated actions for nature and biodiversity and to the broader integration of biodiversity needs into sectoral and horizontal policies. The sectors concerned include agriculture, forestry, fisheries, regional policy & spatial planning, energy & transport, tourism, economic & development cooperation and international trade.

Delegates at the conference on Biodiversity and the EU held in Malahide, Ireland in May 2004.

© Irish EU presidency 2004
www.eu2004.ie



On a thematic basis, objectives are also outlined for integrating biodiversity concerns into research and education, sharing of benefits and traditional knowledge and in international governance issues.

Read the full report:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/develop_biodiversity_policy/malahide_conference/pdf/conference_report.pdf

Responses to the Message from Malahide

The Commission has made considerable progress on many of the Malahide objectives, pending adoption of the forthcoming Biodiversity Communication. With the new Financial Perspectives for the period 2007-2013, a new approach to financing nature management is expected. LIFE-Nature funding will evolve (see article on LIFE on page 26) and the Structural Funds, including the funds for Rural Development and Fisheries, will seek to better incorporate environment and biodiversity concerns. However, the recent Council decision on the Financial Perspectives has significantly reduced the amount of funding likely to be made available for co-financing through these sources.

With the Member States due to finalise the designation of Natura 2000 sites, they will bear a heavy responsibility to ensure adequate financing of the network.

Further progress has also been made on implementation of the nature directives, with particular attention to completion of the network and site management. A pilot action has been initiated to produce guidelines for managing populations of large carnivores, and a strategy to deal with invasive alien species is foreseen for 2006. In all Member States, a guidance and training project on financing of nature conservation has been launched by the Commission in 2006, and DG Environment and DG Energy & Transport are jointly working with an expert group to prepare a guidance document on wind energy and nature.

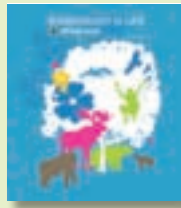
Specifically to assist in the implementation of marine Natura sites, the Commission is drafting a set of guidelines for implementation of the Habitats Directive in the marine environment, to be published during 2006. A timetable will be agreed with the Member States for their submission

of proposals for Natura 2000 sites in the marine areas under their jurisdiction which includes the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the continental shelf.

A range of other initiatives has also been undertaken since the Malahide meeting, which will support the implementation of its objectives. Provisions to prevent damage to Natura 2000 sites under the Habitats and Birds Directives were reinforced in 2004 with the adoption of the so-called Environmental Liability Directive, which enters into force in 2007. The Directive will oblige the causer of damage to Natura 2000 areas to restore or compensate for the damaged habitats and species, as well as compensate for interim losses. The Directive will strengthen the legal protection of the Natura 2000 network.

In other sectors, progress has equally been noted (see also article on page 12). Initiatives in the fishery sector include drafting of recovery plans for a range of fish resources that are considered outside safe biological limits. The plans for Atlantic cod stocks and northern hake have been adopted; others are to follow. An action plan on sharks was adopted in 2005 and a plan for seabirds is under preparation as is a proposal for a regulation on aquaculture to minimise negative effects on ecosystems and biodiversity. Measures in the forestry sector include the preparation of an EU action plan for sustainable forest management and an initiative to reduce illegal logging in developing countries (FLEGT). In the agricultural sector, the main move forward has been the new Rural Development Regulation that will substantially enhance the support for Natura 2000 sites, agri-environment and forest-environment measures, as well as non-productive investments in nature areas and areas of High Nature Value.

Green Week 2006



In an effort to increase awareness and participation, Green Week 2006 will focus on biodiversity and will provide a platform for stakeholders from across the EU to meet, obtain and share information and discuss biodiversity and nature issues. Green Week traditionally reaches a wide audience. It will provide a unique opportunity for the exchange of experience and best practice among non-governmental organisations, businesses, various levels of governance and the public. With school competitions, children from across the EU will have an opportunity to voice their opinion on the state of EU biodiversity and what should be done to preserve it – so they can still enjoy a rich and diverse nature experience when they reach their old age.

Research on biodiversity and nature, and in particular on monitoring tools and indicators will receive increased support, as will the communication of biodiversity issues to stakeholders and the public.

Some Member States have also taken action at national level. For example, the UK has established a £3 million “Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund” to support initiatives aimed at biodiversity protection, and Ireland has announced 13 new initiatives to drive home its National Biodiversity Plan, also including a specific fund for biodiversity.

The forthcoming Biodiversity Communication

The European Commission is preparing a Communication on “Halting the Loss of Biodiversity by 2010

– and Beyond”, which will provide a response to the “Message from Malahide”, outlining what the Commission has done to date and what remains to be achieved. The Communication is expected to centre around an “EU Action Plan for 2010 and beyond”. The Action Plan will call for all EU stakeholders, including Member States, business and civil society to come together around a common set of clear priority actions to meet the 2010 commitments, with implementation of existing policies and legislation as a key element. Looking beyond the 2010 target, the Action Plan is expected to identify a number of policy gaps that will be addressed in the coming years, and call for a debate on a longer-term vision on biodiversity and the EU as a frame for policy.

The Guillemot (Uria aalge) is one of many seabirds which future is dependent on the halt of biodiversity loss in our oceans. © Juan Perez Lorenzo





Looking for opportunities for biodiversity - golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*).
© Arge NATURSCHUTZ-LIFE00 NAT/A/007055

The framework for sector integration

In March 2005, EU Heads of State and Government reaffirmed the importance of the objective of halting the loss of biological diversity by 2010. In doing so, they recognised the importance of biodiversity for certain economic sectors and the incorporation of the 2010 biodiversity target into other policies was underlined as a central issue for reaching the 2010 goal. Half of the priority objectives and a majority of the sub-objectives listed in the Message from Malahide relate to integration of nature and biodiversity considerations into other sectors (see also page 10).

Close to nine out of 10 Europeans believe that policy makers should consider the environment to be just as important as economic and social policies – and they consider that the EU is the most appropriate forum to legislate in this field (Eurobarometer 2005). While these figures reflect environmental issues in general – not biodiversity per se – European nature and biodiversity generally benefit from environmental policies.

Substantial progress has been made on the integration of biodiversity into broader EU policies. Environmental impact assessments are now required for major projects and programmes and policies are also subject to assessments of their influence on, amongst other things, biodiversity. Developers are to be held strictly liable for damage to Natura 2000 sites and many policies aim to reduce pollutant pressures on biodiversity. A wide range of initiatives

are aimed at mitigating the negative effects on biodiversity from, for example, agriculture, fishing, tourism and transport sectors. All these sectors receive direct financial support from the EU budget through various sources, including the different sections of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund. Environment- and biodiversity-friendly criteria have gradually gained more weight in the selection processes for new projects under these funding mechanisms.

LIFE-Nature project restoring traditional haymaking in Manilaid. © LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083



© LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083

Progress until now

Significant progress has been made in the integration of biodiversity concerns into the fisheries and agricultural sectors, while moderate progress is noted for natural resources in general. The integration of biodiversity into the Community's sustainable development and development cooperation policies, as well as trade and energy policies, have been slow but emerging initiatives promise a changing approach.

In 2001, the Commission adopted Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) for natural resources, agriculture, fisheries and economic and development cooperation. While their implementation has not been as comprehensive as it might have been, some success has been noted. In particular, the 2003-2004 review of implementation, effectiveness and appropriateness of the Action Plans resulted in a series of audits of progress. These audits can be found online in the Malahide Conference report (see page 10).

A brief overview of some of the findings is provided here.

Natural resources

The natural resource BAP covers a broad spectrum of policy areas. Good progress has been made under the nature directives on the implementation of the Natura 2000 network (albeit with considerable delay) and on the species action plans. A wide range of other environmental legislation has contributed to reduce pressures on biodiversity, though the effectiveness of some measures – such as strategic environmental assessment and environmental liability – remains to be seen. Today's environmental Thematic Strategies are helping to fill gaps and care has been taken to integrate biodiversity concerns into these. Biodiversity has received equal attention in, for example, regional policies, and the transport and energy sectors. In the transport sector, where infrastructure often causes fragmentation of biodiversity, there have been successes

at the project level. For example, a number of EU supported projects have built eco-corridors across existing transport networks, notably motorways, to link fragmented habitats in the rural landscape. This was, for example, the case with the Belgian LIFE-Nature project in the Flemish Ardennes where municipalities agreed to construct wildlife corridors under existing roads to increase the connectivity of the forest.



Project reference:
LIFE00 NAT/B/007156
Web site:
<http://users.pandora.be/life-natuur-be-7156/>

Other projects, such as the Cornwall Moors LIFE-Nature project in the UK, work together with transport authorities to find ways to move existing infrastructure out of important biodiversity areas.



Project reference:
LIFE03 NAT/UK/000042
Web site:
www.midcornwallmoors.org.uk/

Fishery and marine sector

There has been good progress in the implementation of the BAP for fisheries. In 2003, the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) underwent substantial reforms. It moved towards a more sustainably managed fishery sector aiming at the reduction of fisheries capacity, and the introduction of long term management plans, in order to secure the fishing resources for the future and to ensure that the fishing industry survives. Progress



Connections for nature and biodiversity should be a key element in the development of new infrastructure - Green bridge in Croatia.
© Arge NATURSCHUTZ

has also been made in the introduction of technical measures to reduce by-catch of non-target species, and damage to marine habitats. A number of marine sites have been designated under the Natura 2000 Network and management plans for these sites will emerge in the coming years. Member States are also expected to take an integrated approach to the management of coastal areas through the Recommendation for Integrated Coastal Zone Management, adopted in 2002.

Agriculture

The implementation of the BAP for agriculture is also judged to have made progress. The last CAP reform headed in the right direction, with farm payments scheduled to be gradually decoupled from production and increasingly linked to environmental criteria and compliance with Community legislation in general.



Many LIFE-Nature projects work with fishermen to reduce the threats to bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) from entanglement in fishing gear and noise pollution.

© LIFE03 NAT/E/000062

This should help relieve the pressure of intensification. Meanwhile, significantly enhanced opportunities to support farmland biodiversity are provided under the new Rural Development policy which should help, inter alia, to prevent or slow the threat of abandonment of high nature value farmland. Following the negotiations for the 2007-2013 Financial Perspectives, further reforms of the CAP can be expected. The direction these reforms will take is, however, uncertain.

A large number of LIFE-Nature projects deal with the interface between protection of biodiversity and use of land for agriculture. One prominent way of combining the two objectives is the use of agri-environment measures, financed under the CAP. Thus, one project in Germany hired 120 farmers to help with the clearing of overgrown fen meadows in order to improve the habitat for corncrake. Participating

Local farmer with project animals on Manilaid island.

© LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083



Mitigating conflicts between Monk seals and fishermen

Once widespread throughout the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the waters of northwest Africa, there are now only thought to be two viable populations of Monk seals worldwide. One of these populations is found scattered in colonies around the islands in the Ionian and Aegean Seas. The main threats facing the Monk seal are entanglement in fishing nets and intentional killings and lack of reporting of stranded or wounded individuals by fishermen, who perceive the species as a competitor for fish. The seal is very sensitive to human disturbances and has experienced considerable habitat loss through development and tourism, forcing it to retreat to less favourable areas to feed and breed. A LIFE-Nature project

Young monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) at Kimolos. © MOM



addressing the human influences on the seal recently succeeded in identifying a range of disturbance factors and communicating this widely to stakeholders such as tourists, sailors and fishermen. A follow-up LIFE project will now work in closer cooperation with stakeholders, particularly local fishermen, to protect the highly endangered seal from extinction.



Project reference: LIFE00 NAT/GR/007248

Follow-up project: LIFE05 NAT/GR/000083

Web site: www.mom.gr

farmers could in the future obtain agri-environment support for the measures but simultaneously discovered that there was a local demand for the hay mown in the fens. The project hence led to the revival of traditional hay mowing and an incentive to maintain the Natura 2000 habitats concerned.



Project reference:

LIFE97 NAT/D/004224

Web site:

n/a.

Development cooperation and trade

The implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for development cooperation has been weak. A series of guidance documents – including the joint EC/DFID/IUCN *Strategic Approach for Integrating Biodiversity in Development Cooperation* – were developed, including a substantial round of consultations with developing country partners. However, there have been very few other initiatives and little integration into wider development cooperation policies or trade issues.

However, the new Development Policy calls for enhanced earmarked funding for biodiversity and for the strengthening of mainstreaming of biodiversity into development assistance. Greater provision has been made for the integration of environmental – including biodiversity – concerns in the preparation of country and regional strategy papers which define development assistance programmes. A new thematic programme for natural resources and environment is in preparation.

On trade issues, some new steps have been taken, for example, with the Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT). Illegal logging costs governments in developing countries an estimated €10-15bn every year in lost revenue and causes severe environmental damage. Led by DG Development and DG Agriculture, the Commission is working together with wood-producing developing countries to set out a voluntary licensing scheme to ensure that only legally felled timber enters the EU.



© Iñigo Ortiz de Urbina

Challenges ahead

It is clear that there is a need for further integration of nature and biodiversity concerns into other sectors. In many respects, this would be accomplished by implementing already existing obligations, in both Member States and the EU institutions. Strengthened legislative efforts are, however, needed in regional and spatial development, energy and transport, and in the external sectors of trade and development assistance.

While the fishery sector is moving in the right direction from a legislative point of view, Member States' commitment to enforcement of existing EU regulations and fishery quotas is essential to reach the 2010 biodiversity target. Large amounts of fish are caught above quotas and landed illegally or are thrown back in the sea because they are too small for the fishermen to want to "waste" their quota on them. The recent reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and recognition of problems with unsustainable use in the fisheries sector is a step in the right direction. However, from the negotiations on the Financial Perspectives and on various Community funding mechanisms, it is clear that some countries have not abandoned advocating for EU support to increase fishing capacities, for example, by providing support to build new fishing vessels. Such steps will severely hamper efforts to bring fish stocks back to sustainable levels and require continuous efforts from all stakeholders to convince Member States to think and act in the long term interests of the fish resource as well as their fishing fleet.

The effects of the agreed reforms on the Common Agricultural Policy (including decoupling and increased modulation) remain to be seen. Many stakeholders are already calling for

increased efforts to support biodiversity conservation along with rural development through agri-environment schemes. The 2008-2009 review of the CAP may provide such another opportunity to enhance support to biodiversity with Community support. On a similar note, the effects of new initiatives in the development cooperation sector are still to be seen.

Transport networks, infrastructure and urban sprawl in the EU continue to claim large areas of land and cause fragmentation of habitats and isolation of species. During the last two decades, the built-up area in Europe has increased by 20%. In some areas, as described in the previous section, novel thinking and new partnerships have led to the incorporation of biodiversity concerns into new infrastructure projects. This type of integration should become the norm, not the exception in Member States' spatial planning.

Little concern has in general been given to biodiversity by the energy sector. In recent years, public attention has repeatedly been drawn to the impact of the energy sector on, for example, pristine areas where drilling for oil and gas or a pipeline was planned. Yet, biodiversity is rarely a factor that is genuinely integrated into decision making in the sector. In the coming years, energy security

will be a major topic for the European Community. The future discussions on this issue may provide an opportunity for further integration of biodiversity concerns into the sector. An important challenge for the coming years will be to ensure adequate considerations for biodiversity in the support mechanisms for bio-energy production. Extensively used or marginalised areas are prone to a conversion to energy-crops, such as monocultures of maize, potentially causing further loss and fragmentation of endangered habitats. On the other hand, the use of bio-energy is one answer to combat climate change, which constitutes an unprecedented challenge for biodiversity.

Brittany's landscape. Maintaining biodiversity requires continuous efforts. One of the main challenges is to ensure that biodiversity concerns are integrated into land use and regional planning.
© Emmanuel Michaud,
CEL-LIFE98 NAT/F/5250



Natura 2000 BAROMETER

Nota Bene:

- The Natura Barometer is managed by the European Topic Centre for Biodiversity and based on information officially transmitted by Member States.
- Numerous sites have been designated according to both nature Directives, either in their totality or partially; it is therefore not possible to combine these numbers to get an overall figure for Natura 2000
- The % in surface area relates only to the terrestrial area that has been designated, which is the overall SPA (Birds Directive), proposed SCIs, SCIs or SAC (Habitats Directive) area minus the marine area. Some Member States have designated substantial portions of their marine waters. These are included in the number of sites and areas proposed but not in the % surface area or indications of progress. The sufficiency of national proposals for several marine habitats and species cannot be concluded as further work is needed for the successful application of Natura 2000 under both directives, especially to the offshore marine environment.
- Certain Member States have proposed large areas including "buffer zones", while others have only proposed the core areas. In both cases, Article 6 of the Habitats Directive also applies to new activities, which are foreseen outside a Natura 2000 site but likely to affect it.
- The 10 new Member States had a duty to classify SPAs and propose SCIs by the date of their accession (1st May 2004). All countries have submitted their lists and an evaluation of their completeness is underway.
- The global assessment of national lists may be revised, upwards or downwards, following more complete scientific analysis of the data, particularly at the relevant biogeographical seminars.

MEMBER STATES	SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS					
	Number of sites	Total area sites (km ²)	Terrestrial area (%)	Number of marine sites	Marine area (km ²)	Progress
BELGIË/BELGIQUE	229	2,964.4	9.7	0	0.0	
ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA	38	6,936.2	8.8	0	-	
DANMARK	113	14,708.9	5.9	59	12,173.0	
DEUTSCHLAND	551	47,841.4	8.9	14	16,216.9	
EESTI	66	12,160.8	12.8	26	6,394.3	
ELLAS	151	13,703.2	10.1	4	405.0	
ESPAÑA	512	92,377.5	18.2	20	574.0	
FRANCE	201	16,944.7	2.7	52	2,225.3	
IRELAND	131	2,814.8	2.9	66	810.4	
ITALIA	503	24,864.9	8.1	13	396.2	
KYPROS*	2	107.9	1.9	0	0.0	
LATVIJA	73	5,286.3	7.8	1	171.0	
LIETUVA	97	6,751.4	9.6	4	519.5	
LUXEMBOURG	12	139.2	5.4	0	-	
MAGYARORSZÁG	55	13,519.1	14.5	0	-	
MALTA	6	7.6	2.4	0	0.0	
NEDERLAND	77	10,109.3	12.5	7	4,912.5	
ÖSTERREICH	94	9,275.5	11.1	0	-	
POLSKA	72	33,156.3	7.8	3	8,794.5	
PORTUGAL	50	9,956.4	10.1	10	622.1	
SLOVENIJA	27	4,655.9	23.0	1	2.9	
SLOVENSKO	38	12,294.8	25.2	0	-	
SUOMI	452	28,372.7	6.8	65	5,511.3	
SVERIGE	509	28,647.8	6.2	107	3,016.6	
UNITED KINGDOM	258	14,967.2	5.8	3	710.4	
EU	4,317	412,564.3	8.9	455	63,455.7	

* The area of the MS and the % corresponds to the area of Cyprus where the Community acquis applies at present, according to protocol 10 of the Accession Treaty of Cyprus.

For further information on SPA classification, contact: Micheal O'Brian, DG ENV.B.2.

notably insufficient

incomplete

largely complete

recent significant progress

SITES OF COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE

Number of sites	Total area sites (km²)	Terrestrial area (%)	Number of marine sites	Marine area (km²)	Progress	MEMBER STATES
278	3,220.9	10.0	1	181.2		BELGIË/BELGIQUE
864	7,244.1	9.2	-	-	TBE	ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA
254	11,136.0	7.4	118	7,959.0		DANMARK
4,596	53,123.3	9.8	46	18,033.7		DEUTSCHLAND
509	10,591.1	15.9	34	3,418.8	TBE	EESTI
239	27,641.0	16.4	102	5,998.0		ELLAS
1,381	119,100.7	22.6	88	5,191.2		ESPAÑA
1,227	42,915.1	6.9	88	5,000.3		FRANCE
413	10,560.7	10.2	92	3,386.2		IRELAND
2,255	43,977.3	13.9	162	2,227.1		ITALIA
26	509.5	8.0	5	50.0	TBE	KYPROS*
267	6,663.6	10.0	2	171.0	TBE	LATVIJA
331	7,651.3	11.0	6	556.3	TBE ↑	LIETUVA
47	383.1	14.8	-	-		LUXEMBOURG
467	13,929.2	15.0	-	-	TBE	MAGYARORSZÁG
23	39.3	12.5	0	0.0	TBE	MALTA
141	7,508.4	9.5	24	3,553.4		NEDERLAND
164	8,883.9	10.6	-	-		ÖSTERREICH
192	13,123.9	4.2	0	0.0	TBE	POLSKA
94	16,502.9	17.4	23	490.2		PORTUGAL
259	6,359.6	31.4	3	0.2	TBE	SLOVENIJA
382	5,739.4	11.8	-	-	TBE	SLOVENSKO
1,660	47,932.2	12.7	94	5,141.7		SUOMI
3,903	62,356.2	13.6	320	5,833.0		SVERIGE
610	25,100.5	6.5	42	9,109.0		UNITED KINGDOM
20,582	552,193.3	12.1	1,250	76,300.7		EU



notably insufficient



incomplete



largely complete



recent significant progress



TBE to be evaluated in context of biogeographical seminars

* The area of the MS and the % corresponds to the area of Cyprus where the Community acquis applies at present, according to protocol 10 of the Accession Treaty of Cyprus.

For further information about proposed SCIs, contact: Micheal O'Brian, DG ENV.B.2

The Natura 2000 Barometer: commentary on progress

The present barometer covers the state of play as of December 2005 for all 25 countries as regards both the Habitats and the Birds Directives. As can be seen, the 10 new Member States have all submitted lists of SPAs and proposed SCIs to the Commission. Some, such as Slovakia and Slovenia have proposed very significant areas under Natura 2000, covering a quarter to a third of their respective territories.

The proposed SCIs are now being evaluated through the biogeographical seminars to determine whether they cover habitats and species sufficiently. For three of the biogeographic regions (Alpine, Boreal and Pannonian), the first seminars for the new Member States were held in 2005. For Cyprus and Malta, initial bilateral screening meetings have also been held. In the case of SPAs, there is no biogeographical screening process, but the published lists of Important Bird Area (IBA) together with other scientific references for all new Member States provide valuable references for evaluating the completeness of national SPA networks.

New horizons for nature and biodiversity

Increasingly, the private sector is recognising the importance of ecosystems, biodiversity and landscapes, and the impact their activities may have on these. Prompted partly by the increased awareness of environmental issues amongst the public and decision makers, higher expectations from consumers and stakeholders, and the realisation that socially and environmentally responsible investments can make good business sense, more and more companies and private businesses are striving to take the environment into account in their operations.

Encouragingly, some companies have already taken concrete actions to mitigate their direct impacts on the environment, including biodiversity. Individual actions range from, for example, integrated company strategies for the environment and for sustainable development in general, to setting up financial support schemes for conservation projects.

Wholesalers, furniture shops and manufacturers (especially of wooden furniture), paper producers and energy companies take part in certification schemes so as to demonstrate to their customers and shareholders that their products are sustainably produced. Food products are labelled to indicate that they are produced respecting ecological and social criteria. Increasingly,

people are willing to pay more for sustainably produced goods – or to engage in actions against goods being produced from illegally harvested materials (tropical timber), for instance, or with the use of unnecessary chemicals and pesticides (toys and food).

Large investors such as banks, hedge funds and pension funds play a major role in encouraging such positive developments, as they can choose to not support a project that does not take into account environmental issues. Financially, it also appears that it makes good sense to invest in companies with sustainability strategies. For example, the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes (DJSI), developed by the Swiss-based Sustainable Asset Management, tracks the financial per-

formance of the leading sustainability-driven companies worldwide. Compared with the “normal” Dow Jones Global Index World, the DJSI World has consistently provided higher financial returns on investments. On the European level, the European Investment Bank (EIB) has also taken a first step in the right direction by increasing its staff competence in environmental issues; however, much is still to be achieved in terms of actively taking into account nature and biodiversity issues by prominent stakeholders, such as the EIB and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

The rest of this section provides some examples of good practices by private enterprises and organisations.

Land management and biodiversity – a view from the European Landowners Organisation

The European countryside is no wilderness. It is a managed, changing environment, with land managers at its centre. The majority of land managers are economically dependent on the land they manage and are very aware and directly affected by the consequences of poor practices. In general, the land managers organised in the European Landowners Organisation (ELO) believe that adequate management, rather than the creation of strict natural reserves, is the best way to preserve nature in the long term. It is in a landowner's interest to protect and enhance biodiversity on his/her land, as biodiversity offers a significant protection against a range of threats, including pests and soil erosion. A rich biodiversity also increases the real estate value of the land, both for aesthetic and economic reasons.

Although many land management activities, including agriculture, can have a negative effect on the environment, changes in practices, policies and in consumption patterns are leading to lesser impacts. At the same time, rural land management can provide valuable environmental benefits, such as establishing con-



Managing semi-natural habitats using mowing. © LIFE99 NAT/F/006321

ditions for and maintenance of biodiversity, and the management of landscapes, which are strongly intertwined with our cultural identities. Land management can also mitigate negative effects on the environment caused elsewhere, for example through the absorption of carbon by soil which is managed extensively and by trees.

The ELO believes that certain principles underlie sustainable land management and should guide environmental policies. These principles include: taking an inter-generational time view; taking a science-based approach; working in partnership, based on voluntary participation; invoking the propor-

tionality principle¹; taking a decentralised approach; as well as working with natural cycles. Three factors lie behind these principles: the changing land use practices of land managers; the major switch in EU policy from protection of agriculture towards an integrated rural policy; and the accumulating evidence of the magnitude of the contribution of private land management to landscape conservation and biodiversity.

Thierry de l'Escaille,
ELO Secretary General

.....
¹ [Ed] The principle of proportionality is the second major principle governing the exercise of powers of the European Union. By virtue of this principle, action taken by the Union, in terms of e.g. laws and regulations, should not exceed what is required to achieve the objectives set out in the Treaties.

The use of horses in forestry operations can be as efficient as machines - and does not compact the soil. © LIFE02 NAT/S/008483



The BP Conservation Programme

BP has set itself some ambitious goals as a company: "No accidents, no harm to people and no damage to the environment". The company realised early on that writing cheques to environmental groups would not be sufficient to make a real contribution to these goals. Partnerships with experts in this field have proven

Looking for a helping hand - the greater mouse-eared bat (Myotis myotis) is close to extinction in Europe. Its last strongholds are in Spain and Eastern and Central European countries.
© Arge NATURSCHUTZ-LIFE00 NAT/A/007055



to be a way to contribute to national priorities, whilst weaving sustainable development into the thread of their work and beyond. One example of how this has been achieved is through the BP Conservation Programme: a corporate/NGO partnership for biodiversity conservation that occupies a unique niche among conservation programmes.

The BP Conservation Programme offers young, aspiring conservationists the training, resources and funding required to execute projects that tackle biodiversity issues of global importance. The Programme was launched in 1990, managed by Flora & Fauna International, BirdLife International and BP. Since then, the partnership has grown to include Conservation International and the Wildlife Conservation Society as well.

Fifteen years of student-led conservation work has yielded an impressive range of accomplishments from the 278 projects supported in 77 countries – from implementing conservation plans to discovering new species. For example, in the vast network of caves in Transylvania, Romania, home to large European bat populations, Zoltan Nagy and his team worked together with school children and local authorities to increase awareness about the fascinating little creatures and to facilitate sustainable tourism in the caves. With the forthcoming designation of Natura 2000 sites in Romania, Zoltan's NGO will surely be one of the voices to push for sufficient designation of sites for bats.

Marianne Carter
*BP Conservation Programme
Manager*

Quarry mining and biodiversity considerations

Lafarge is one of the world's largest quarry mining groups, present in more than 70 countries worldwide. A front-runner in the business, Lafarge aspires to define its operations in the context of a strategy of sustainable development. Amongst other things, this implies that the group takes biodiversity issues into account during and after its operations. For example, managers observed as many as 250 pairs of sand martins (*Riparia riparia*) nesting in the sandy cliffs exposed after the group started quarrying a site in Ramsdorf, Germany. Activities are now suspended in the concerned part of the quarry during the visiting period of this relatively rare bird species, listed in the Birds Directive.

More than 20% of the Group's quarries have an impact on biodiversity. In order to better evaluate the impact of its operations, Lafarge has recently set up

indicators to analyse biodiversity evolution on its sites, together with a scientific committee including WWF and the French Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle. After a one year test-period in France, USA, the UK and Spain, the aim is to progressively set up a biodiversity plan for all quarries. Nevertheless, stakeholder consultation and cooperation will remain central in the company's approach to its ongoing quarry operations in order to ensure that local issues are taken into account.

Since 2000, Lafarge requires a quarry rehabilitation plan to be elaborated from the outset of activities on any new site. The rehabilitation plan must consider the views of local stakeholders and can amongst other aim to develop a nature reserve, restore former land-uses (agriculture or forestry), or developing recreational areas. For example, at Whisby

in the UK, the group restored 160 ha of quarry area in 2001 and, together with the local authorities, created a nature park. Today, the Whisby Nature Park is home to 28 different species of butterfly and receives around 100,000 visitors annually.

In cooperation with:
Arnaud Colson, *Director of Public Affairs, Environment & Mineral Resources, Lafarge Granulates* and Michel Picard, *Vice President Environment, Lafarge.*

Sand martins nesting in a quarry.
© ARR Lafarge Medialibrary



Implementing Natura 2000

During the last 15 years, LIFE-Nature has supported over 870 nature projects and has contributed significantly to the implementation of the Habitat and Birds Directives by directly supporting the identification, management and restoration of sites in the Natura 2000 network. Over €680 million of European funding plus a similar contribution from partners and beneficiaries have thus been channelled directly into nature conservation work across Europe.

Between 1985 and 2004, 1,844 pSCIs and 498 SPAs in the EU15 were targeted by a LIFE project at least once, i.e. 2,342 Natura 2000 sites in total¹. This means that around 11% of pSCIs and 13% of SPAs within the Natura 2000 network were targeted at least once by LIFE-Nature. Furthermore, 15.5% of these pSCIs and 20.7% of these SPAs targeted by LIFE have been covered by several projects.

By 2004, an impressive record of 90% of the habitats listed in the Habitats Directive had been targeted at least once by a LIFE-Nature project under LIFE II (1996-1999) or the LIFE III (2000-2004). Only 22 habitats were not directly targeted in this period. These habitats are mainly located in central and southern Europe or in the new Member States, who have only benefited

¹ For new Member States and Romania, data are not currently available.



Informing the public about flora and fauna found in a Natura 2000 area in the Spanish National Park of Cabo de Gata-Níjar. © LIFE00 NAT/E/007304

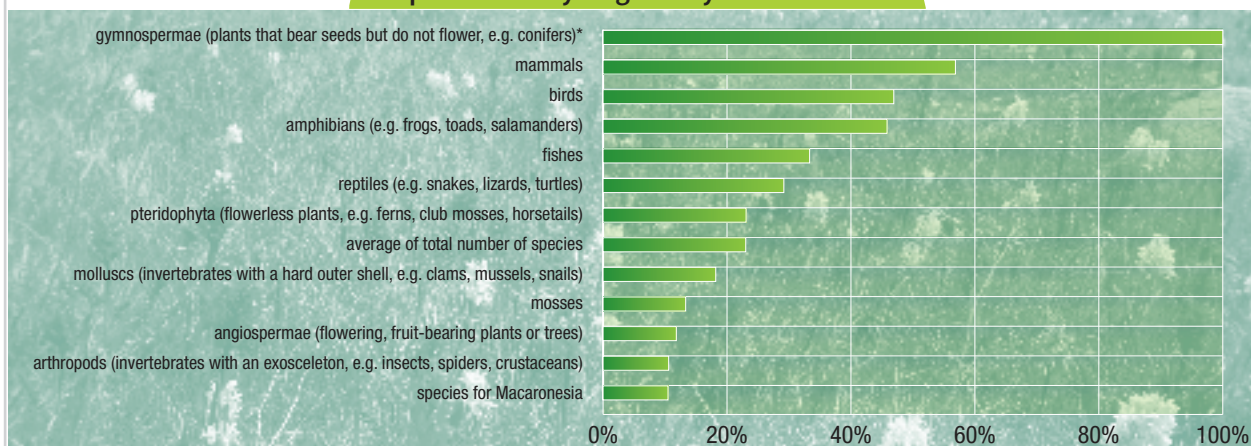
from LIFE-Nature since 2000. Some of the projects initiated in the 2004-2006 period include actions for several of these habitats. The coverage by LIFE-Nature of listed habitats should therefore be close to 100% when the last batch of projects get underway in 2006/2007.

About half of LIFE-Nature projects directly affect one or more species

from the Habitat and Birds Directives. At least 23% of the species listed in these Directives have been directly targeted by one or more LIFE-Nature projects. However, the number of species benefiting from LIFE is actually much higher, as the figures do not take into account species not mentioned in the project objective but for which the actions carried out have a positive effect.



Species directly targeted by LIFE-Nature*



*The graph shows the percentage of species listed in the Habitat and Birds Directives, which have been targeted by LIFE-Nature (there is only one listed species of gymnospermae).

LIFE on the ground

LIFE-Nature projects tackle a wide range of issues that all relate to biodiversity. LIFE-Nature being a demand-driven programme, project approaches vary, depending both on the specific conditions of the problem being addressed and the mandates or competences of the project beneficiary and their partners. Details of all LIFE projects can be found in the Projects Database on the LIFE web site at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>.

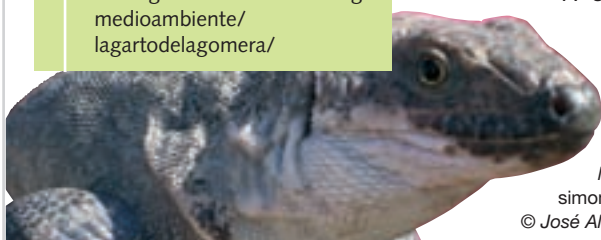


LIFE at work - studying amphibians with dip netting. © LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083

Some LIFE-Nature projects deal with single species, such as a project on the giant La Gomera lizard, long thought to be extinct but rediscovered in 1999. In 2002, only 20 individuals were left, severely threatened by isolation, habitat destruction and predation by feral cats (an invasive alien species). The project has managed to breed the lizard in captivity and has succeeded in more than doubling the population size since the project start. The lizards bred at the centre will start being released in suitable areas of the island in the coming years.



Project reference:
LIFE02 NAT/E/008614
Web site:
www.gobiernodecanarias.org/medioambiente/lagartodelagomera/



Similarly, in Romania, the Hungarian meadow viper – until recently thought to be extinct in Romania – has been recently rediscovered. The snake, which has yellow with a distinct zigzag pattern on its back, was once common throughout the Carpathian Basin, where its natural habitat, the steppe, dominated the landscape. It is now one of the rarest subspecies of snake in the world and the most endangered reptile in Europe. In Hungary, LIFE-Nature supports a project that will strictly protect the known habitats of the snake. To deal with potential inbreeding problems, the project has set up a breeding facility to ensure the long-term viability of the population.

A second LIFE-Nature project was launched in Romania in 2005

with the aim of creating a protected area with a buffer zone around the habitats of the newly discovered population.



Project reference:
LIFE04 NAT/HU/000116
Web site:
www.mme.hu/rakosivipera/main_en.htm



Project reference:
LIFE05 NAT/RO/000158
Web site:
www.crim.ro/

Other projects, such as the Schütt-Dobratch project in the Austrian Alps, deal with complex habitat mosaics and cross-sector issues. This project restored wet habitats and meadows and improved the conditions for amphibians and dragonflies in the area. An increase in the populations of priority butterfly species, and an enlarged area suitable for orchids, were seen as a result of the meadow

The la Gomera giant lizard (Gallotia simonyi gomerana)
© José Álvarez

management implemented during the LIFE project. The project also constructed a bear migration bridge over a highway, and the first brown bear was seen crossing from Slovenia into the Austrian Alps immediately afterwards, in 2005.



Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) taking a walk in Austria.

© Arge NATURSCHUTZ-
LIFE00 NAT/A/007055



Project reference:

LIFE00 NAT/A/007055

Web site:

www.schuett.at/home/index.php

LIFE-Nature has been instrumental in developing management plans for Natura 2000 sites across Europe. More than half of LIFE-Nature projects have developed management plans, collected data or in other ways contributed to the long term perspectives developed for the area targeted by the project. A new LIFE Focus publication (see Natura News on page 29) provides a thorough overview of approaches to management plans and projects that have successfully implemented these. The experiences gained through the LIFE-Nature projects represent a source of information *par excellence*



Monitoring flora in a LIFE-Nature project.
© LIFE98 NAT/E/005358

for the Member States and the Commission when moving towards the target of drawing up management objectives for all Natura 2000 areas by 2010. For example, two strategic LIFE-Nature projects in France and Italy were instrumental in producing national guidelines for Natura 2000 site management plans, which can serve as inspiration for other Member States. The two approaches differ, with France placing emphasis on public consultation and facilitation and Italy giving emphasis to sharing of experiences between managers of similar sites in different regions.



Project reference:

LIFE95 NAT/F/000533

Web site:

<http://natura2000.environnement.gouv.fr/>



Project reference:

LIFE99 NAT/IT/006279

Web site:

www.minambiente.it

Slovenia is one of the new Member States that is currently implementing a LIFE-Nature project in order to reach similar objectives. Having proposed

about 35% of its territory as Natura 2000 areas, the country sees a strong need for local administrations to be aware of the biodiversity values within their jurisdictions. The main objective of the project is therefore to provide local administrations with a model on which to base actions aimed at the conservation of habitats and species of EU interest. To serve as an example, an official set of "Guidelines for the preparation of management plans for Natura 2000 sites in Slovenia" will be produced and used to draw up and implement five management plans for sites covering a total area of over 67,000 ha. To enhance the information available for local managers, the project will set up a Natura 2000 information system and will organise a range of workshops to facilitate the use of this internet based tool.



Project reference:

LIFE04 NAT/SI/000240

Web site:

www.zrsvn.si/life/sl/default.asp

A majority of LIFE-Nature projects also seek to integrate the management of Natura 2000 areas with agri-environment measures, sustainable forestry or similar long-term sustainable management practices. An approach often seen in LIFE-Nature projects is the preparation of an area to make it suitable for long-term management by grazing, which can be supported by agri-environment funds.

Restoring a pedlar's path in the Kostomuksha Protected Area. © Sergey Trakhov - LIFE04 TCY/ROS/000050



Biodiversity in LIFE-Environment and LIFE-Third Countries

Although not necessarily targeting biodiversity and nature directly, these two other branches of LIFE have equally played a key role to improve conditions for biodiversity and nature in Europe and its neighbouring countries. LIFE-Environment has for example supported projects that has revolutionised methods to detect and clean oil spills on water, with great potential benefits for biodiversity. LIFE-Third Countries finances projects in countries bordering the EU, including accession and candidate countries. Numerous preparatory actions have been undertaken to support countries in protecting their biodiversity and natural parks, and in bringing their management and legislation into line with European standards. Many other have direct positive benefits on the European environment, by for example, minimising pollution crossing the EU's frontiers.





© A. Renders

This approach is used in the Belgian project on the St Hubert plateau where more than 800 ha of bog woodland, transition mires and beech and alder forests will be restored. Part of the restoration work will entail grazing with sheep on more than 100 ha. The measures will improve the interesting habitats and enhance biodiversity while at the same time making the area more attractive to deer, the icon of this forest where St Hubert is supposed to have been miraculously converted.



Project reference:

LIFE03 NAT/B/000019

Web site:

http://mrw.wallonie.be/dgrne/sibw/offh/life_tourbieres/

A range of other projects work to reinstall traditional grazing methods and hay-mowing, two land use methods that have been disappearing in Europe but upon which more than a third of all species in Europe depend for their continued existence. One of



Island off the Swedish coast - traditionally grazed by cattle and sheep.

© LIFE00 NAT/S/007118

the many LIFE-Nature projects that successfully reinstated grazing with hardy cattle focussed on a Swedish island where the traditional "alvars" were slowly being abandoned and overgrown. The project succeeded in increasing the level of alvar grazing from 60% to 85% in five years and managed to convince politicians to include scrub clearing activities in the Swedish Rural Development Plan. This made it possible for land managers to implement similar measures to the benefit of biodiversity across the whole country.



Project reference:

LIFE96 NAT/S/003185

Web site:

www.o.lst.se/h/amnen/Natur/projekt/avslutade/projekt/skydd_restaur_life.htm

In a LIFE project in Estonia, the beneficiary set out to restore and preserve an ambitious 16 different sites of Boreal Baltic coastal meadow. The halophilous

(salt-loving) plant communities found in coastal meadows are remarkable for their ability to endure extreme environmental factors such as: the sea water's high salt content; short- or long-term flooding; recession of the waterline due to ebb; and the crushing impact of waves. For centuries, people living in coastal areas have cut hay on the more stable grass shores and grazed animals on the more shingle ones, but this practice has slowly disappeared in the last 30 years. As a consequence, the lower parts of the coastal meadows are turning into reed fields while the higher parts are overgrown with trees such as alders and willows. In the course of time, such areas become wooded and the halophilous communities, as well as the wide range of bird species dependent on them, disappear. The LIFE-Nature project set out to reintroduce the traditional management methods on more than 1,500 ha of coastal meadows, to support plant communities as well as the declining populations of the natterjack toad and other amphibians. Project experiences are available in a set of "Best practice guidelines for coastal meadow management" which can be downloaded from the LIFE homepage (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>).



Project reference:

LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083

Web site:

www.envir.ee/life.westest/

Haunted by legend, protection of the wolf (Canis lupus) requires involvement of all stakeholders. © Hamsterfun



LIFE-Third Countries - Wolf management plan for Croatia

The wolf population in Croatia is estimated at about 150 individuals, ranging mainly along the borders with Slovenia and with Bosnia-Herzegovina to Montenegro. For Croatia, the conservation of wolves, as for large carnivores in general, represents one of the most challenging and complex issues in nature conservation involving ecological, economical, institutional, political, and cultural factors. Previous efforts to protect the wolf have been challenged by the lack of stakeholder involvement in decision making and a resulting lack of understanding and interest in implementing measures. One of the main objectives of the project was to draw up a Wolf Management Plan for Croatia, which would be accepted and respected by relevant stakeholders. The plan was elaborated through workshops and close consultation with all affected and interested stakeholders, including livestock breeders, hunters and conservation organisations. The plan was adopted by the competent ministry in 2004 and can be downloaded from the project web site.



Project reference: LIFE02 TCY/CRO/014

Web site: www.life-vuk.hr

LIFE on the wing

In 2004, we celebrated 25 years of the Birds Directive, with a Memorandum of Understanding between Birdlife International and the European Hunters Association (FACE) marking a new understanding between important stakeholders in bird conservation. The LIFE Focus publication "LIFE for birds" can be downloaded from the LIFE web site (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>).

Almost half of LIFE-Nature projects have included bird conservation actions, often striving to bring together stakeholders under the common objective of improving conditions for Europe's endangered bird species. In the Finnish Wetlands

The great bustard (Otis tarda) is almost extinct in much of Europe. With the help of LIFE, the breeding populations in its stronghold in Spain and in Central & Eastern Europe will be boosted.
© LIFE05 NAT/A/000077

project, local hunters associations teamed up with local municipalities and the Finnish nature conservation authorities to improve conditions for more than 20 rare bird species in a range of wetland areas in the south of Finland. The project also implemented better visitors' guidance and the management of visitors in the areas.



Project reference:

LIFE99 NAT/FIN/6278

Web site:

www.metsa.fi/natural/projects/wetlands/index.htm

projects generally work together with the national or regional electricity companies to place mechanisms on the power lines to prevent the birds from being electrocuted when resting on the lines or to make the lines more visible for birds in flight. Several such projects are currently being carried out to improve the conservation status of the great bustard. The projects are independent but have taken up an outstanding level of cooperation to coordinate actions and share of information.



Projects reference:

LIFE05 NAT/A/000077

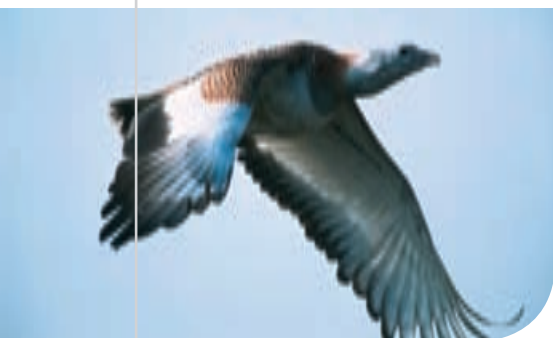
Web site:

www.grosstrappe.at/indexe.html

LIFE05 NAT/SK/000115

Web site:

www.soprs.sk



LIFE at sea

LIFE-Nature has supported some 50 projects focusing on the marine environment. Many of these projects have targeted critically endangered species and have worked to bridge conflicts between use of marine resources, tourism and conservation goals. A forthcoming LIFE Focus publication will provide a comprehensive examination of LIFE's contribution to the management and conservation of marine biodiversity.

The contribution of LIFE in identifying marine areas of conservation interest, and the drawing up of management plans for the sites, has been a constructive element in the process of implementing marine Natura 2000 sites. For example, working in cooperation with local authorities, fishermen, tourism and other local stakeholders, one Portuguese project drew up management plans for an area with five

marine SCIs and seven SPAs around the Azores. In the process, ways to reduce by-catch of the highly threatened loggerhead sea turtle were identified, as were measures to reduce the negative impacts of whale watching tourism on whales and dolphins and new means to increase the breeding success of the Madeiran storm petrel. The project made a major contribution to increased awareness and was a

Loggerhead sea turtle (Caretta caretta).
© LIFE99 NAT/IT/006271





Whale watching has become an important tourist industry on the Acores.
© LIFE98 NAT/PT/5275

catalyst for a range of local initiatives to protect the loggerhead sea turtle and the bottle-nosed dolphin, upon

which the local economy is partly dependent.



Project reference:
LIFE98 NAT/P/005275
Web site:
[www.horta.uac.pt/
projectos/macmar/life/
index.html](http://www.horta.uac.pt/projectos/macmar/life/index.html)

Many LIFE-Nature projects also deal with habitats bordering the sea, such as dunes and salt marshes. In Denmark, a recent project focussed on the restoration of dune habitats along the Danish West Coast bordering the North Sea. The project carried out large scale restoration and management on more than 5,600 ha,

including large areas of grey dunes, a rare "mature" dune habitat, and improved habitats for rare carnivorous plants such as the butterwort and the sundew. The project gathered valuable management experiences, which were shared widely with managers from elsewhere in Europe including at an international workshop with participants from the UK, the Netherlands, Latvia and Germany.



Project reference:
LIFE02 NAT/DK/008584
Web site:
[www.skovognatur.dk/Emne/
Naturbeskyttelse/Naturpleje/
Naturprojekter/Klitthede/
Restorationdune.htm](http://www.skovognatur.dk/Emne/Naturbeskyttelse/Naturpleje/Naturprojekter/Klitthede/Restorationdune.htm)

Bringing LIFE to the future

The call for proposals issued in 2005 was the last on the current LIFE programme, which expires at the end of 2006. In order to ensure continued Community financial support for the environment, the Commission has therefore proposed a new financial instrument for the environment for the period 2007 to 2013: LIFE+ (LIFE Plus).

The general objective of LIFE+ will be to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of Community environmental policy and legislation, including the integration of the environment into other policies, thereby contributing to sustainable development. In particular, it is envisaged that LIFE+ will support the implementation of the Sixth Environmental Action Programme, including the Thematic Strategies, and will finance measures and projects with European relevance in Member States. The new programme will have three components. The first, LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity, will contribute to the implementation of Community policy and legislation on nature and biodiversity, with particular reference to the Birds and Habitats Directives, and will support the further development of the Natura 2000 network.

This strand will also work to build up a knowledge base for evaluating Community nature and biodiversity policy, and will support the development of monitoring tools in this respect, as well as working for better environmental governance, and broadening stakeholder involvement. The second component, LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance, will support innovative policy approaches, with a special focus on climate change, environment and health and quality of life, and natural resource use and waste. The last strand, LIFE+ Information and Communication, will support the dissemination of information and awareness raising on environmental issues and will support accompanying measures, such as information campaigns, conferences, publications and training. The new programme will be decentralised with

around 80% of the budget allocated to the EU Member States for financing projects and measures through national programmes.

The European Parliament gave its first opinion during the summer of 2005 and the Council reached a partial political agreement on LIFE+ on 02 December 2005. At the time of writing, the budget had not yet been fixed, since a general agreement concerning the Financial Perspectives for the EU budget in 2007-2013 had not yet been reached. The institutional process will continue during 2006 with a view to enable the entry into force of LIFE+ in 2007.

New developments in LIFE+ will be reported in LIFEnews, the electronic newsletter from the LIFE Unit, which can be viewed and subscribed to via <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>.





Forming partnerships for biodiversity

Countdown 2010 is an alliance of governmental and non-governmental partners, who are committed to contributing actively to halt the loss of biodiversity in Europe by 2010. Countdown 2010 was initiated in May 2004 and follows three main lines of action: partnership, communication and assessment. The Countdown 2010 Secretariat, hosted by the European Regional Office of IUCN - the World Conservation Union, assists partners in taking action along these lines. With only four years to go, strong partnerships across sectors and actions at all levels are needed to reach the 2010 biodiversity target.



Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*). © Arge NATURSCHUTZ-LIFE00 NAT/A/007055

The key service provided by the initiative is communication: Countdown 2010 gives a distinct profile to the 2010 target and gives visibility to the achievements of its partners. It provides a platform for organisations focusing on different aspects of biodiversity to communicate and share experiences and information. In order to assess progress towards the 2010 target, Countdown

2010 is developing a "Scorecard", a simple, science-based mechanism to regularly assess and communicate progress to the larger public and enable quick responses if goals are not being reached.

Working in partnership with local authorities

Halting the loss of biodiversity in Europe can only be achieved with



Launching Countdown 2010 in Malahide - government representatives, the (then) European Commissioner for the Environment and stakeholders from civil society.

© Irish EU presidency 2004





Local stakeholders working to protect the black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) in Spain.
© Arge NATURSCHUTZ-LIFE00 NAT/E/007340

support from stakeholders at all levels. Countdown 2010 works closely with local and regional authorities, from small municipalities to large regions.

In order to protect nature, activities at local level are often very cost-effective and are more likely to benefit from the involvement of local stakeholders and generate local interest. Countdown 2010 acknowledges this crucial element and the involvement of local authorities in the alliance is actively striven for. The first region to join the initiative in 2004 was the Dutch region of Noord Brabant followed by the cities of Tilburg and Boxtel. The region of Noord Brabant has developed a local strategy for biodiversity and a regional platform for exchange of expertise. In 2006, the Countdown 2010 Scorecard will be piloted in the region. The city of Tilburg has introduced an active planning policy to combine urban development and biodiversity conservation. The EU Committee of the Regions is providing strong support by spreading the Countdown 2010 message to its members and several other regions are about to

join. These include Ile-de-France and Paris in France, Wallonia in Belgium, and Cantabria, Asturias and Castilla y León in Spain.

Countdown 2010 will facilitate the development of twinning arrangements among local governments from different countries to allow the exchange of relevant experiences. For instance, one common problem encountered by local authorities is the lack of expertise on biodiversity issues amongst local administrators. At the recent Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Countdown 2010 and the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) launched a capacity building programme to provide expertise and knowledge on biodiversity for local authorities. In addition, a new programme established in partnership with ICLEI, the network of local governments for sustainability, will support partners in developing local action plans to integrate biodiversity into urban planning.

Countdown 2010 is also expected to support implementation of the Action Plan anticipated from the European



Commission in its forthcoming Communication on Biodiversity.

Natura 2000 and countdown 2010

One of the milestones of the Countdown 2010 process will be the finalisation of the Natura 2000 network. The Countdown 2010 partners take actions to sensitise partners and citizens on this issue. A tailored communication toolkit will be completed and distributed to local governments to support them in raising awareness among citizens on biodiversity. Special attention will be dedicated to best practices in managing Natura 2000 sites. The project is developed on the basis of the European Commission's efforts to build up a comprehensive set of examples of good nature management practices, based on the experiences gained through more than 10 years of LIFE-Nature projects and from the partners in the Natura Networking Initiative (NNI). These best management examples may also become leading Countdown 2010 success stories.



The "Good practices in managing Natura 2000 sites" web site can be accessed via the European Commission DG Environment Nature page.

To find out more on the Countdown initiative, visit www.countdown2010.net.

natura News

A facelift for the Natura 2000 Newsletter

Regular readers of this Newsletter will have noticed a change of appearance. Behind this new look stands a new external LIFE team. Since July 2005, the Astrale GEIE (www.astrale.org) has taken up the monitoring and promotion of projects co-financed by the European Commission's LIFE-Nature, LIFE-Environment, and LIFE-Third Countries programmes. Astrale is made up of 11 partners from across Europe. As part of the consortium is a new Communications Team in charge of the Natura 2000 Newsletter (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/infoproducts>) and of communication issues related to the European Commission's LIFE programme (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>). The Astrale Communications Team is based in Brussels and can be contacted via aidl@astrale.org.

New LIFE-Nature publication on integrated management



A new Focus brochure from DG Environment's LIFE Unit examines the contribution of the LIFE-Nature programme to the integrated management of Natura 2000 sites. The publication provides a summary of the key issues surrounding the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and offers guidelines and recommendations by Member States. It moves on to provide examples of management plans that were produced during LIFE-Nature projects and finally provides a list of the 428 LIFE-Nature projects that have included management plans. A considerable proportion of the management plans deals with specific habitats and species. Together with the data collected for their preparation, they are of particular interest to site managers dealing with the same habitats and species in similar conditions throughout the EU.

The publication can be downloaded from the LIFE web site (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>). Printed copies can be ordered from the Lux-

embourg Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (<http://bookshop.eu.int/>).

Last LIFE call



An impressive 228 proposals for projects under LIFE-Nature were received by the Commission in this last call for proposals under the extended LIFE III programme. The proposals this year come from 24 Member States and from Romania. They have been assessed by an external team of evaluators in consultation with the LIFE Unit and the Nature & Biodiversity Unit in DG Environment. A short list of the best projects was presented to the Habitats Committee in April 2006. The decision on financing of projects is now taken and the selected projects should be launched in late 2006 or early 2007.

To find out more about the new projects, keep an eye open for the 2006 project compilation, which will be made available on the LIFE web site (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>) later this year.

More biodiversity in organically managed soils

Science for Environment Policy, a

new service from DG Environment, reports that a recent study has shown that organically managed soils have higher species richness in both bacteria and nematode communities. The soils also exhibit greater biological activity than conventionally managed soils. Researchers furthermore found that organically managed soils contained significantly lower levels of nitrate substances and that they showed more resilience to drying-rewetting disturbances compared to conventionally managed soils.

And apropos of organically managed soils, in accordance with the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming, the European Commission will launch an EU-wide campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of organic food in 2006.

Study: van Diepeningen, A.D. et al (2006), "Effects of organic versus conventional management on chemical and biological parameters in agricultural soils", *Applied Soil Ecology* 31:120-135.

Subscribe to Science for Environment Policy at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research_alert_en.htm.

Strategies for the environment and a Communication on Biodiversity

Implementing the Sixth Environmental Action Programme, which foresees a total number of seven Thematic Strategies for the environment, the Commission in 2005 and 2006 presented five new Thematic Strategies. The strategies focus on air quality, the marine environment, sustainable use of natural resources, waste, and the urban environment. They are in the frontline of a comprehensive overhaul of the European outlook on the environment. Two further strategies on soil and the use of pesticides are due in 2006. The full text of the proposed strategies can be found on DG Environment's web site (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment>). Also, the EC Communication on Biodiversity, for which an extensive stakeholder consultation was launched at the end of 2005, is expected to be out in mid 2006. *Developments regarding the Communication can be followed on the web site of the Nature and Biodiversity Unit (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature>).*



© K. Hoyer

The European Environment – State and Outlook

A new European Environment "State and Outlook" was released in December 2005 by the European Environment Agency (EEA). The impressive work provides a thorough analysis of the state of the European environment, including



assessments of the terrestrial and aquatic environments and an analysis of a core set of indicators for biodiversity. The main conclusions for biodiversity are that progress can be seen but that much more effort is needed to implement the instruments already available and that new instruments are likely to be needed in order to maintain our ecosystems and biodiversity on which our standards of living depend.

The book can be ordered in hard copy or downloaded in electronic form from the EEA's web site (www.eea.eu.int).

Development cooperation and biodiversity

Under the auspices of the Countdown 2010 initiative, a large scale conference focussing on development cooperation and biodiversity will be held in autumn 2006. The conference specifically aims to identify ways to better integrate and better coordinate biodiversity concerns into European Union and Member States development cooperation. A central element will be to look for ways to support partner countries to sustainably manage biodiversity as a global public good. Participants are expected from across the world and will include politi-

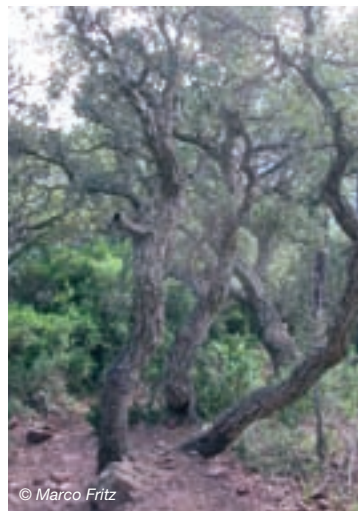
cal leaders, representatives of civil society, experts in biodiversity conservation, and institutions directly involved in development cooperation.

The conference is organised by IUCN with financial support from the European Commission, France and possibly some other EU Member States. To find out more, visit the web site of IUCN Europe (www.iucneurope.org).

Review of the EU SDS

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) began an extensive review in 2005, which is due to be finalised by mid 2006. The review reinforced the importance of a balanced three-pillar approach to development in Europe and the rest of the world, taking into account social, environmental as well as economic considerations. It maintains that the "growth first" argument to generate the means to invest in social and environmental protection ignores the many complex interactions and feedbacks between the three pillars of development, and may in the long run be detrimental to further economic growth and our future well-being.

Cork oak forest habitats need to be managed in a sustainable way.



© Marco Fritz

Recent reports from the European Environment Agency

In early 2006, the EEA issued a report on "Priority issues in the Mediterranean environment". The report calls for increased political will to enforce envi-

ronmental legislation in the Mediterranean and deals with issues such as the invasion of the Mediterranean Sea by alien species, fisheries and pollution and their effects on biodiversity and ecosystems in and around the Mediterranean Sea.

The report on "Sustainable use and management of natural resources", released in December 2005, provides a synthesis of the use of renewable and non-renewable resources in the EU. One of the main conclusions of the report is that increasing efficient use of resources constitutes a key opportunity for Europe to reduce production costs. As opposed to labour efficiency, for example, which has gone up by 270% since 1960, the efficiency of energy use has only increased by 20%.

Both reports can be downloaded from the EEA's web site (<http://reports.eea.eu.int/>).

EU Environment Policy Review

The European Environment Policy Review (EPR) is an annual publication from DG Environment, which highlights the main developments in Environment Policy in the EU and Member States and provides input to the discussions at the Spring Council of EU Heads of State and Government. The EPR monitors progress in the implementation of the EU's sixth Environmental Action Programme and of the environmental pillar of the Lisbon Strategy to make the EU the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. The EPR for 2005 assessed all Member States' achievements to meet the environmental objectives of the Guidelines for the Lisbon strategy, including the biodiversity target.

The EPR can be downloaded from the web site of DG Environment <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/lisbon.htm>.

Did you know about the Natura Networking Initiative?

The Natura Networking Initiative (NNI) is an initiative by Eurosite supported by the European Commission. It aims to promote the good management of Natura



2000 sites, to enable the sharing of management experiences and to raise public and stakeholder awareness of Natura 2000. The initiative offers the possibility for managers to join at different levels, from sharing basic information about a Natura 2000 site and its management, to organising Green Days or becoming a fully fledged ambassador for Natura 2000, actively responding to requests from other site managers who are looking for advice on specific issues. Eurosite also presents an annual award to sites for outstanding management. In 2005, this award was given to three projects that have received LIFE-Nature co-funding (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/lifenateurosite.htm>).

To find out more about the activities of Eurosite or to register a site with the NNI, visit www.eurosite-nature.org.

Biodiversity links

Biodiversity and Nature Unit of the European Commission

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature>

LIFE Unit of the European Commission

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life>

European Commission Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism

<http://biodiversity-chm.eea.eu.int/>

Green Week – "Biodiversity is Life"

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek>

The Convention on Biological Diversity
www.biodiv.org

IUCN Red list of globally threatened species
www.redlist.org

Biodiversity hotspots in the world presented by Conservation International
www.biodiversityhotspots.org

Noah's Ark on the internet – images, films and descriptions of a wide range of threatened species

www.arkive.org/

- especially for kids:

www.planetarkive.org/

- especially for teachers:

www.arkiveeducation.org

Biodiversity Conservation Information System – portal for information sharing between managers and decision makers on the conservation and sustainable use of living resources

www.biodiversity.org

Business and biodiversity – what businesses can do to integrate biodiversity in their operations

www.businessandbiodiversity.org

Placing a value on biodiversity – forum for discussion and sharing of experiences

www.biodiversityeconomics.org



30 05 > 02 06

Green Week 2006

Conference Programme

Green Week, organised annually by the European Commission since 1999 gathers thousands of participants from all parts of Europe and all areas of society. The theme of Green Week in 2006 will be "Biodiversity is Life". The programme includes sessions on biodiversity in society, globalisation aspects, landscape and space, and nature management. Participation in the conference is free. There will be a dedicated LIFE and Nature and Biodiversity stand, as well as stands featuring key LIFE and other projects. News about the conference and information on registration are available on the web site of Green Week (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek>).



	THEMES	SESSIONS (four parallel strands)			
		BIODIVERSITY AS A GLOBAL ISSUE	MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES	SPACE FOR NATURE	BIODIVERSITY AND SOCIETY
TUESDAY 30.05.2006					
10:30	1. Opening session: biodiversity is life				
14:30-18:00	Analysing problems	2. Living Beyond our means The Ecological footprint	3. Using and abusing: crisis for our natural resources	4. Shrinking space for nature	5. Biodiversity: what value?
WEDNESDAY 31.05.2006					
9:30-13:00	Making things happen	6. The impacts of trade ... and what trade can do	7. Reap what you sow: agriculture and forests	8. Creating a European nature network – the challenge of Natura 2000 and beyond	9. Biodiversity and eco- system services: their value and costs of non-action
14:30-18:00	Making things happen	10. Sharing Benefits: biodiversity, biotech- nology and econom- ic development	11. The deep blue: oceans and seas	12. Reconciling nature and development	13. Understanding for management: research, indicators and monitoring
	THURSDAY 01.06.2006				
9:30-13:00	Making things happen	14. Biodiversity – Luxury or Necessity for Development Cooperation?	15. Nature as a source for development: branding, ecotourism	16. Climate change: new threat for biodiversity and challenge for biodi- versity policies	17. Biodiversity on the political decision table
14:30-18:00	Acting together	18. The global partner- ship: the system of International Governance and Biodiversity	19. Biodiversity, the bottom line: business and biodi- versity	20. Fingers in the mud: engagement at the regional and local level	21. Passing the mes- sage: biodiversity for people in the street
FRIDAY 02.06.2006					
9:30-13:00	22. Closing session: Counting down 2010 - the Community commitment				

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