



NELEAP - Protection of *Emys orbicularis* and amphibians in the north European lowlands

LIFE05 NAT/LT/000094



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Project description:

Background

Populations of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) and the fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*) are declining throughout the North European lowlands, while the decline of the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) has been observed in Denmark, Estonia, Finland and Germany and is suspected in Lithuania and Poland. Considerable knowledge has been acquired on the design and improvement of pond landscapes of high value for amphibians, thanks mainly to three LIFE projects. The first project dealt with the consolidation of the European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*) in Denmark (LIFE99 NAT/DK/006454). The two other projects focused on the protection of the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) in the Eastern Baltic region and on the management of the *Bombina bombina* in the entire Baltic region (LIFE04 NAT/EE/000070 and LIFE04 NAT/DE/000028). From basic experience on turtle conservation in Lithuania, Poland and Germany, sufficient data is available to implement protection measures on herpetological (reptiles and amphibians) sites of European interest and to develop a concept of active protection of sites of high herpetological diversity in the North European lowlands.

Objectives

The main objective of the project was to ensure the favourable conservation

status of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) in the North European lowlands. The project also planned to ensure a favourable conservation status for the European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*) and the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) in the areas where they occur together with *Emys orbicularis*. The project would furthermore demonstrate how to protect *Bombina bombina* in artificial and drained lowland meadows of Brandenburg in Germany and in the large natural swamps and fenland of Zuvintas National Park in Lithuania. The aim was to protect more than 90% of the *Emys orbicularis* individuals in the north European lowlands and to demonstrate the validity of protection measures for *Bombina bombina* and *Triturus cristatus* as well as other amphibian species such as *Hyla arborea* and *Pelobates fuscus*.

Results

The NELEAP project improved the conservation status of its targets species: the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*) and the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*).

It first carried out preparatory actions, such as developing monitoring methods and defining the favourable conservation status for turtles and amphibians. It also carried out an evaluation of the ponds, and turtle hibernation and nesting sites, ahead of drawing up action and local management plans and genetic studies. For the foreseen actions, it was necessary to purchase or lease land and develop buffer zones and compensation measures.

Conservation work included pond restoration and digging, the creation of nesting and hibernation sites for turtles, and the implementation of a sustainable grazing regime. To ensure the sites' continued management, agreements were concluded. Furthermore an extensive awareness campaign was carried out to improve the knowledges of experts and local communities.

International experience exchange was vital to the success of the project. The impact of the project actions was monitored up to 2009. Data show that restored habitats can be quickly colonised by species. Newly dug or restored ponds acquire within 2-3 years typical vegetation, fauna and ecological qualities favourable for the target species. Knowledge acquired from pond projects for the conservation of amphibians is being transferred throughout Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania and Poland.

The After-LIFE conservation plan sets out measures for maintaining the restored habitats. The farms in the project sites will ensure long-term management, supported by the agri-environmental schemes and the farming of cattle. In Poland, the Directorate of Forestry in Olsztyn is taking care of the nature reserves in forest areas, while in the west of the country, the sites will be managed by Klub Przyrodnikov through other national projects. The Bialowezha National Park has a long-term management plan for the nature reserve in Bialowezha forest and its surroundings. In Germany land purchase and registering of the land for nature conservation will help protect habitats.

The continuation of the project results was also boosted by an educational campaign aimed at schools, which included turtle days. The beneficiaries hope that the value of amphibians will become an interesting conversation topic for visitors in B&Bs on farms in southern Lithuania.

Further information on the project can be found in the project's layman report (see "Read more" section).

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Species - Amphibians

Keywords

protected area, nature conservation

Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- Directive 92/43 - Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora- Habitats Directiv ...

Target species

Bombina bombina *Emys orbicularis* *Triturus cristatus*

Target Habitat types

- 6430 - Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels
- 6450 - Northern boreal alluvial meadows
- 7140 - Transition mires and quaking bogs
- 7150 - Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion
- 7210 - Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the Caricion *davallianae*
- 7230 - Alkaline fens
- 91E0 - "Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)"
- 3150 - Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation
- 3160 - Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds
- 3260 - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion *fluitantis* and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation
- 6270 - Fennoscandian lowland species-rich dry to mesic grasslands

Natura 2000 sites

SPA	PLB280007	Puszcza Napiwodzko-Ramucka
SCI	PLC200004	Puszcza Białowieska
SCI	DE2847303	Kölpinsee
SCI	DE2948304	Poratzer Moränenlandschaft
SCI	DE2950301	Breitenteichsche Mühle
SCI	DE3050301	Brodowin-Oderberg
SCI	DE3243301	Oberes Rhinluch
SCI	DE3450303	Stobbertal
SCI	LTALY0005	Zuvinto ezeras ir Buktos miskas
SCI	LTLAZ0001	Kuciuliskes kaimo apylinkes
SCI	LTLAZ0020	Petrosku miskas
SCI	LTLAZ0022	Slavanteles upes slenis
SCI	PLH080007	Buczyna Szprotawsko-Piotrowicka
SCI	PLH280009	Bieńkowo

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Lithuanian Fund for Nature
Type of organisation	NGO-Foundation
Description	The Lithuanian Fund for Nature (LFN) is a non governmental organisation in charge of five programmes: environment policy and management, nature protection and site management, agriculture and rural development, ecological education, Baltic coastal conservation and protection of the Curonian Lagoon. The Nature Protection and Site Management Programme covers the conservation of biodiversity and its status assessment, protection of rare and endangered species, the drawing up and implementation of site management and species action plans, and the selection and management of protected areas.
Partners	Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve (ŽBR), Lithuania Veisiejai Regional Park (VRP), Lithuania Meteliai Regional Park (MRP), Lithuania Północnopodlaskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków (PTOP) (Poland) Białowieski Park Narodowy (BNP), Poland Klub Przyrodników (Klub Prz), Poland Arbeitsgemeinschaft Natur- und Artenschutz e.V. (Agena e.V.), Germany Landschaftsförderverein (LFV) Oberes Rhinluch

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE05 NAT/LT/000094
Duration	08-JAN-2005 to 31-DEC -2009
Total budget	2,346,185.00 €
EU contribution	1,161,373.00 €
Project location	Brandenburg(Deutschland) Associated Lithuania (LT)(Lithuania Lietuva) Associated Poland (PL)(Poland Polska)

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Read more:

Project web site	Project's website
Publication: Layman report	Title: Layman report (LT version) Author: Nerijus Zableckis, Dalia Bastytė & Lars Christian Year: 2009 Editor: Lithuanian Fund for Nature No of pages: 24
Publication: Technical report	Title: Project's Final technical report Year: 2010 No of pages: 75

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