Natura 2000
Europe’s nature for you
... across the 27 EU countries
Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers to your questions about the European Union

New freephone number: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (http://ec.europa.eu).

Further information on Natura 2000 is available from http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009


© European Communities, 2009
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged. All photos in this publication are under copyright and cannot be used for purposes other than this publication without the express permission of the photographers.

Printed in Belgium

Printed on recycled paper that has been awarded the EU eco-label for graphic paper http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index_en.htm
CONTENTS

2  Europe’s nature – a rich natural heritage

4  Nature – a valuable resource

6  Nature ... under threat

8  What are we doing about it? – Europe’s response

10 The ‘Habitats’ and ‘Birds’ Directives

12 The Natura 2000 Network – a European network of sites

14 Natura 2000 – part of a living landscape

16 Putting people at the heart of Natura 2000

18 How will Natura 2000 work in practice?

20 How do we know if we have succeeded?

22 Natura 2000 – what can you do to help?

24 Photographer’s credits
Europe’s nature –
a rich natural heritage

Europe covers less than 5% of the planet’s land mass. Yet, despite its small size, it has a stunning diversity of plants, animals and landscapes, many of which are found nowhere else in the world.

Differences in climate, topography and geology account for much of this biodiversity. From the Arctic Circle to the warm Mediterranean coastline, from the peaks of the Alps to the vast open plains of central Europe, the range of natural conditions on our small continent is impressive.

Our long association with the land has been equally important in shaping our countryside. For centuries people have developed different ways of working the land, which has given rise to many so called ‘semi-natural’ habitats, rich in wildlife (hay meadows, wooded pastures, open heaths) yet entirely dependent upon continued human use for their survival.

Europe’s rich mixture of nationalities, cultures, languages and identities is also strongly reflected everywhere in our landscape. Few places in the world have such a varied, contrasting and localised patchwork of habitats, wildlife and cultural landscapes so tightly interwoven in so small an area – it is this that makes Europe’s nature so unique.

This is our natural heritage.
DO WE VALUE OUR NATURE ENOUGH?

Monet’s painting of poppy fields is estimated at €5–50 million, the real thing costs €5,000/ha

By protecting our natural heritage we can ensure that the rich diversity of plants, animals and habitats in Europe is maintained for generations to come.

Whether we live in cities or in the countryside, most of us go in search of nature at one time or another to admire its beautiful scenery, to walk, swim, fish, relax, explore or simply enjoy the fresh air and listen to the bird song. This has significant benefits for our health and wellbeing.

But nature has much more than an intrinsic or scenic value, it also provides us with a wide range of benefits such as food, fibres, clean water healthy soil. Wetlands, for instance, provide a natural defence against floods, acting like sponges soaking up the excess water. Reedbeds help purify polluted waters by absorbing toxic substances, bees pollinate our crops and peatlands act as natural sinks for carbon dioxide, the number one cause of global warming.

Above all, nature provides a vital source of income for countless people across Europe who harvest its natural resources in a sustainable manner. Low intensity farming, for instance, is practiced over large areas of Europe, providing a livelihood for millions of people.
A recent survey of the economic value of three National Parks in Wales concluded that the Parks supported nearly 12,000 jobs and produced a total income of ca €250 million a year.
Europe’s nature is under increasing threat. Populations of species are declining at an alarming rate and many valuable natural and semi-natural habitats are rapidly disappearing. Today, almost half of Europe’s mammals and a third of our reptile, fish and bird species are endangered.

This dramatic decline is primarily due to the loss and fragmentation of the habitats upon which the species depend. Many of these habitats are shrinking in the wake of more intensive land uses, major infrastructures, such as roads, and the steady spread of urban areas.

In only a few decades half of Europe’s valuable wetlands have been drained for land reclamation and almost three-quarters of the dunes in France, Italy and Spain have disappeared under the relentless pressure of mass tourism.

More recently, climate change has become a major concern both for humans and for biodiversity, as has the continued spread of invasive species which displace our native plants and animals. Other threats to nature include pollution, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, and land abandonment.
It is not just the rare species, such as bears, butterflies and endemic plants, that are threatened. Populations of the common house sparrow have fallen dramatically in the last 20 years due to the loss of their habitats. Most of Europe’s heaths have also disappeared. Consequently, many of the species that depend on these habitats for their survival, such as the sand lizard and the Dartford warbler, are also on the decline.
In the face of this alarming decline, people all over Europe have expressed increasing concern over the loss of their natural heritage and of the biodiversity upon which we all depend for our health and prosperity.

Governments of the EU Member States have responded accordingly and, in 2001, committed themselves, at the European Summit in Gothenburg, to stop the loss of biodiversity in Europe by the year 2010.

As nature does not recognise national boundaries, such an ambitious target is best achieved by coordinating efforts and pooling resources.

Rivers, such as the Danube, flow through many countries – if one of them damages part of the river, all may be affected. Migratory birds travel the length and breadth of Europe in search of resting, feeding and breeding grounds. If their habitats are only protected in one part of Europe and not in another, the species’ chances of survival are inevitably poor.

European legislation sets the standard for nature conservation across the European Union and enables all 27 Member States to work together within the same strong legislative framework in order to protect our most vulnerable species and habitat types.
The common crane migrates across Europe from its winter feeding grounds in the south to its summer breeding grounds in the north. Thanks to European legislation, sites have been protected all along its migration route and populations in the EU are increasing as a result.
The ‘Habitats’ and ‘Birds’ Directives

The cornerstones of Europe’s legislation on nature conservation are the Birds and Habitats Directives.

➤ The Birds Directive was adopted in 1979 and aims to protect all wild birds and their most important habitats across the EU. The Directive puts an end to certain practices such as the keeping and sale of native wild birds, or indiscriminate methods of killing and introduces a legal mechanism for regulating other activities, such as hunting, to ensure that they are sustainable.

The Directive also requires all 27 Member States to protect the most important sites for all migratory birds and over 190 particularly threatened species, paying special attention to wetlands of international importance.

➤ In 1992, the EU adopted the Habitats Directive. This introduces similar measures to the Birds Directive to protect Europe’s wildlife but extends its coverage to a much wider range of rare, threatened or endemic species, including over one thousand animals and plants. Some 230 rare and characteristic habitat types are also, for the first time, targeted for conservation in their own right.

These Directives represent the most ambitious and large-scale initiative ever undertaken to conserve our natural heritage across the European Union.

IBERIAN LYNX (Lynx pardinus)
With a population of around 100–150 individuals, the Iberian lynx is now one of the most endangered species in the world. Agricultural intensification and infrastructure developments (such as new roads) have fragmented its habitat to such an extent that it is now confined to a few isolated pockets in the south west of Spain and Portugal. Illegal hunting, trapping and road kills add to its troubles as does the lack of its main food source, the rabbit, which was almost wiped out by the disease, Myxomatosis. If the Iberian lynx does not recover it could be the first cat species to go extinct since the sabre-toothed tiger 10,000 years ago.
The range of habitat types to be conserved under the Habitats Directive is very diverse – it varies from natural forests in Scandinavia, to limestone pavements along the Atlantic sea board and species-rich meadows high up in the Alps. Threatened species such as the eagle owl, the large copper butterfly and the eastern pasqueflower are also now protected.
The Natura 2000 Network—a European network of sites

At the heart of both Nature Directives lies the creation of a Europe-wide ecological network of nature conservation areas—called the Natura 2000 Network.

Every country has designated Natura 2000 sites to help conserve the rare habitats and species present in their territory. Over 25,000 sites are included in the Network so far. In total, they cover a substantial area: almost a fifth of Europe’s land area and an important part of the surrounding seas. This makes it the largest network of conservation areas anywhere in the world.

The individual Natura 2000 sites range in size from less than 1 ha to over 5,000 km² depending on the species or habitats they aim to conserve, the majority are around 100–1,000 ha. Some are located in remote areas but most form an integral part of our countryside and contain a range of different habitats, buffer zones and other elements of the landscape.

As a result, Natura 2000, is not only safeguarding some of Europe’s rarest species and habitats, but it also provides a safe haven for countless other animals, plants and wildlife features which, although more common, are an equally important part of our natural heritage.
HOW ARE NATURA 2000 SITES CHOSEN?

For species and habitats under the Habitats Directive:
- **STAGE 1:** The first step is taken by the Member States. Each country identifies sites that are important for the conservation of species and habitats listed in the Habitats Directive occurring naturally in their territory. The choice must be made on purely ecological grounds at this stage.
- **STAGE 2:** The Member States send their national Natura 2000 lists to the European Commission. The latter examines the information provided across the whole biogeographical region and, in cooperation with the Member States, the organisations concerned, independent scientists and non-government organisations, selects sites of Community importance. If the list is deemed insufficient, Member States are requested to propose more sites in order to complete the network.
- **STAGE 3:** The final stage is for Member States to formally protect these areas and introduce measures to maintain or restore them to a good conservation state.

For species under the Birds Directive sites are classified by the Member States and after evaluation included in the Natura 2000 Network.
People often associate nature conservation with strict nature reserves where human activities are systematically excluded. Natura 2000 adopts a different approach. It fully recognises that man is an integral part of nature and the two work best in partnership with one another.

Indeed, many sites in Natura 2000 are valuable precisely because of the way they have been managed up to now. In such cases, it will be important to ensure that these sorts of activities (e.g. extensive farming) can continue into the future.

So, whilst there will certainly be some strict nature reserves in the Network where human uses are limited for the sake of the rare wildlife and habitats present, the majority of Natura 2000 sites will continue to be managed, taking into account the vulnerable habitats and species present.

In this way Natura 2000 supports the principle of sustainable development. Its aim is not to stop economic activities altogether, but rather to set the parameters by which these can take place whilst safeguarding Europe’s biodiversity.
WHAT ARE THE OBLIGATIONS ON NATURA 2000 SITES?

Within Natura 2000 areas, Member States must ensure that:
• activities are avoided that could significantly disturb the species or deteriorate the habitats for which the site is designated.
• positive measures are taken, where necessary, to maintain and restore the habitats and species to a ‘favourable conservation state’

In addition, Natura 2000 sites should be protected from any new development projects or major changes in land-use that could seriously damage their nature values, unless these developments are of over-riding public interest and adequate compensation measures are taken. How these conditions are respected is for each Member State to decide. Nevertheless, all conservation measures must take into account the economic, social and cultural as well as regional and local characteristics of the sites in question.
Putting People
at the heart of Natura 2000

All over Europe, examples already exist of how Natura 2000 works in practice.

In most cases, only minor adjustments will be needed to make sure existing land uses are compatible with the conservation of the species and habitats present, for instance mowing fields a few weeks later to allow the ground nesting birds to fledge, avoiding disturbance in areas where animals breed, feed or rest at certain times of the year. …

There will be times however where the changes may need to be more substantial in order to prevent a site from deteriorating further or to help restore it to a favourable condition.

In all cases, it is essential that those who live and work in Natura 2000 sites are closely involved in decisions over their long term management. From private landowners and users, government authorities, industries, to recreational groups, conservationists, local communities and concerned citizens – everyone has an important role to play in making Natura 2000 a success and in halting the loss of biodiversity.

DEALING WITH LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENTS

Development projects that involve significant changes to the way the land is used within a Natura 2000 site (e.g. construction of a new road, turning a meadow into a commercial forest plantation) must be first assessed to determine whether the project is likely to have a significant effect on the site’s nature values. If the impact is not considered significant the project can go ahead.

If the effect is expected to be significant then alternative less damaging options must be fully explored and selected – e.g. changing the route of the new road, choosing another site outside Natura 2000.

In exceptional cases damaging projects within Natura 2000 can still go ahead if they are considered to be of overriding public interest and no viable alternatives exist. In such cases, compensation measures will need to be taken in order to ensure that the Natura 2000 Network is not compromised.
MANAGING FORESTS SUSTAINABLY IN EASTERN GERMANY

Covering 150 km², the Hainich beech forest is one of the largest of its kind in Europe. After German reunification, the regional government of Thuringia declared significant parts a national park and Natura 2000 site in order to prevent over-exploitation. The Association of private landowners who own much of the communal land was initially strongly opposed to this designation, fearing that it would prevent them from using the forest for economic purposes. But the conservation authorities soon allayed their fears: the association practices a form of selective forestry, involving the removal of mature trees through a rotation system, which is compatible with the conservation of the forests’ biodiversity. A management agreement was drawn up between the two parties to agree on how to exploit the forest’s resources whilst safeguarding the valuable habitats and species present. Thanks to this agreement, the foresters continue to earn a living from their forest without the competition of large-scale clear cutting operations.

FARMING THE STEPPES OF CASTRO VERDE, PORTUGAL

On the vast steppic plains of Castro Verde in southern Portugal the traditional farming system is based on non irrigated extensive cereal production, laid fallow every 2–3 years. The resulting semi-natural steppic habitats are of immense nature conservation value, particularly for birds. However, increasing competition from intensive cereal production has forced many farmers to abandon their land in search of jobs elsewhere, with serious consequences for both the local economy and the bird populations. With the inclusion of Castro Verde in Natura 2000, conservation groups and farmers decided to join forces and lobby the government for an agri-environmental support scheme that would enable farmers to continue to manage their land as before. The scheme has proven to be very popular; over 350 km² of steppic farmland is now being managed extensively again and the birds are returning in large numbers.
How will Natura 2000 work in practice?

KEEPING THE WATER CLEAN AND HEALTHY IN FRANCE

The Auvergne region in Central France is famous for its abundance of freshwater. Much of this comes from the Loire which starts life high up in the Massif Central. One of the tributaries of the Loire, the Allier, provides 70% of the drinking water for inhabitants living in and around the city of Clermont Ferrand. In order to ensure that the water quality remains of a high enough standard for human consumption, the town council created special protection zones around the abstraction sites. This requires a good deal of control and management, so when most of the site was also included in Natura 2000 because of its remarkable alluvial forests, the authorities turned to the local conservation group for help. A management agreement was signed between the two parties identifying what should done in the area in order to guarantee the water quality and maintain the area’s rich natural values. As a result the local inhabitants of Clermont Ferrand not only have a constant source of clean water but also an attractive nature reserve on their doorstep.

RESTORING WETLANDS IN WESTERN GREECE

The Amvrakikos delta is a massive wetland complex extending for hundreds of kilometres in every direction. This brackish environment provides an ideal habitat for waterbirds, including the rare Dalmatian pelican. In the 1980s, parts of the delta were drained for agriculture but this was not a success, the water table became too salty. The regional Development Agency decided instead to concentrate on making best use of the area’s natural assets. With an international reputation as a biodiversity hotspot, the Delta was ideally placed to capitalise on the emerging eco-tourism market. Having restored significant parts of the delta back to their original state, an integrated management plan was developed with local stakeholders to promote land-uses and eco-tourism initiatives that are compatible with the principles of Natura 2000. Judging by the strong local support and the steady influx of nature tourists this new vision for Amvrakikos is beginning to pay off.

WATCHING THE WHALES IN THE AZORES

Situated way out in the Atlantic, the deep waters around the Azores teem with an abundant marine life. The archipelago is one of the best places in Europe to see whales and dolphins. Such a valuable natural asset has great potential for eco-tourism but could harm the animals if not handled properly. To ensure that local whale watching operations are run professionally, the Azores government introduced a mandatory code of conduct for operating in Natura 2000 marine areas. In exchange for respecting the regulations, local businesses are given valuable training in business management as well as marine conservation. Thanks to this cooperation, the Azores is rapidly gaining an international reputation for whale watching and local businesses are growing as a result.
How will Natura 2000 work in practice?

Many of the initiatives mentioned on this page have been co-financed by LIFE. The EU’s LIFE+ fund has at least €800 million available during the period 2007–2013 for nature and biodiversity projects, which includes support for best practice or demonstration projects within Natura 2000 sites


Electricity Companies Help Save Rare Birds in Spain

The Aragon region produces much of Spain’s electricity. Unfortunately, the extensive network of power lines and cables are a major cause of mortality for highly threatened birds such as the bearded vulture. Many end up electrocuted after colliding with the high voltage lines. To address this problem, the regional government is working closely with electricity companies to adjust over 350 km of powerlines in Natura 2000 sites so that they are rendered safe for birds. Since the start of this cooperation, there has been a dramatic decline in the death tolls. Some birds have even taken to nesting on the high electricity towers. The electricity companies have agreed to run all new cables underground from now on.

Learning to live with large carnivores in Romania

The Vrancea mountain range hosts the second densest population of large carnivores in Romania, and possibly also in the EU. People here have, over the centuries, found ways to co-habit in relative harmony with these large, potentially dangerous predators. However, in recent times, many of the traditional safeguards used to protect land and livestock have been neglected, with a resulting increase in sheep predation. After accession to the EU, the Environmental Protection Agency set up a local intervention unit to help farmers protect their livestock again and to compensate them for any losses incurred. These will eventually be included in the EU’s Rural Development funds for Romania. The Agency is also helping to diversify the local economy by promoting the region as a prime wildlife watching destination. Here at least large carnivores and humans have found ways to co-habit.

Conservation supports local farming in Denmark

The Varde river valley was once a complex patchwork of salt meadows of high biodiversity value. Over time these were systematically drained to make way for intensive agriculture but when the market for intensively produced grass pellets collapsed the local Farmer’s Union had to look for alternative sources of income. They found that the area would be ideally suited to extensive grazing and mowing, which could receive financial support under agri-environmental schemes, if only the meadows could be re-wetted. Enter the conservation authorities who took on the work of restoring the meadows to their original natural state. Over 250 farmers signed up for agri-environment schemes worth €1 million a year. Their future is now more secure and the wet meadows are once again managed with nature in mind.

Forestry and conservation in Finland

Central Finland is at the heart of the country’s timber industry. Here most of the forest is in private hands and any restriction on its use due to Natura 2000 designation is unlikely to be well received. The Regional Environment Board decided that the best way to persuade private foresters to accept Natura 2000 was to offer them the option of having a management plan drawn up for their forest. This would assess the forest’s economic potential over the next 10–20 years and clarify what could be done from a conservation perspective. Such a practical tool not only helped the owner manage his resource more efficiently and profitably but also helped to dissipate the myth that Natura 2000 meant taking all the forest out of production. Here was proof to the contrary.

Rivers Authorities put the bends back into Austrian Rivers

Like many alpine rivers in Austria, the Obere Drau was straightened and canalised to regulate its flow and allow farming activities right up the water’s edge. Yet, with time it became evident that these hard engineering solutions were causing more damage than good, and not just to the wildlife. Without its natural meanders and riverine habitats, the river flowed at a much faster rate leading to a rapid erosion of the riverbed. Groundwater levels dropped as a result and farmers began to complain that their fields were drying out. With the Obere Drau’s inclusion in Natura 2000, the river authorities decided to adopt a softer approach to managing the river. Meanders were replaced along a 40 km stretch, side streams opened up and riverine wetlands restored. This had such a positive impact on both groundwater levels and wildlife, that there are now plans to carry out similar work on other parts of the river.
How do we know if we have succeeded?

To be able to evaluate the Natura 2000 network, it will be important to monitor the habitats and species listed in the two EU nature Directives at regular intervals to assess their conservation status.

Every six years, Member States are asked to report to the Commission on the conservation status of the species and habitats in their country and on the measure they have taken to conserve them. The Commission then examines this information at a supra-national level to determine the overall status for each species or habitat across the EU.

This not only helps determine the overall success of the Natura 2000 network but also identifies problem areas where conservation efforts may need to be stepped up.
A NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR A RARE ENDEMIC FISH

On the island of Rhodes, there lives a rare freshwater fish, called the gizani, which exists nowhere else in the world. This little animal is a master of survival – it spends its entire life in the island’s freshwater streams, springs and small reservoirs, braving the winter floods in below freezing conditions and the heatwaves and droughts at the height of summer. Most of its habitats are now protected under Natura 2000 and regulations have been introduced to control water abstraction and any other damaging operations. Recent monitoring surveys indicate that the gizani is recovering well as a result of these activities. Indeed, its fight for survival has captured the hearts and minds of inhabitants and tourists alike. There is now even a visitor centre in its honour.

PROTECTING THE BAT CAVES OF NORTHERN EUROPE

One of the last strongholds for northern bat species in Europe is located along the border regions of Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany. Unfortunately, many of the traditional hibernation spots here, such as caves, have already been damaged by recreational activities but thanks to history alternatives are available. The region is riddled with subterranean tunnels and bunkers from wartime Europe, as well as disused mines and ancient fortifications. Over 150 of these hibernation roosts are now protected under Natura 2000 and closed to the public. The bats are responding well: populations in Natura 2000 sites are stable for the first time in 50 years.

IMPERIAL EAGLES FLY OVER HUNGARY AGAIN

The imperial eagle is a large majestic bird of prey that ranges across the steppic plains of the Carpathian Basin. Its stronghold in the European Union is in Hungary, but by the 1980s there were just 10-20 pairs left here. The national bird conservation organisation decided therefore to launch a major rescue operation for the species. Over 10,000 electricity poles were insulated to prevent electrocution, nests were guarded, juvenile birds were radio-tracked, sick birds rescued and treated, and most importantly of all, local farmers and foresters were enlisted to help maintain extensive arable farming practices and avoid clear-felling in key breeding areas. By 2005 its population had risen to 75-80 breeding pairs thanks to these efforts.

REINTRODUCING THE CHAMOIS TO THE APENNINES

The Abruzzo chamois once roamed freely across the high mountains of the Appenine region in central Italy. However, excessive hunting and habitat loss pushed this endemic subspecies literally to the edge of extinction. By the mid 1950s the population had dwindled to 20 individuals. Conservation authorities decided therefore to set up a captive breeding station in the area and start reintroducing small nuclei of chamois back into carefully selected areas within the Apennines. This was accompanied by a major information campaign and stricter controls over hunting and tourism. Since the programme started, the population has increased to over 1,000 individuals – its highest in over a century.

BITTERNS ARE BOOMING AGAIN IN BRITAIN

The bittern is a secretive bird found mostly in marshes and extensive reedbeds. The evocative booming sound of the male is often the only sign of its presence. Over the last century the species has been in steady decline all across Europe, principally due to the loss of suitable habitats. The UK is no exception. By 1997 the population had dropped to only 11 booming males and was sure to disappear if nothing was done. Action was immediately taken to restore the species’ existing habitats and to recreate new reedbeds at strategic locations across the country so that it could eventually expand its range. The bittern population has increased fivefold in the last seven years as a result, making it one of Britain’s greatest wildlife success stories.

A HELPING HAND FOR PLANTS

The Canary Islands have one of the highest levels of plant diversity in Europe. However, the plants’ restricted distribution makes them very vulnerable to any changes in their environment. Some species like the *Sambucus palmensis* are now so rare that simply protecting their habitats is not, in itself, enough. The Canaries government has therefore started a recovery programme for these species, taking seeds from wild plants and growing them in special nurseries in order to replant them at suitable locations on the islands. Already the wild population of *Sambucus palmensis* has quadrupled in size. And there is no shortage of places to reintroduce it either: over 30% of the land in the Canaries is designated as Natura 2000 in recognition of the islands remarkable biodiversity.
Natura 2000 –
what can you do to help?

There are many things you can do to support the aims of the Natura 2000 Network, wherever you are in Europe:

➧ Find out about, and explore a Natura 2000 site near you; many places offer walks, events, wildlife-watching trips and other activities for all the family to help you get the best out of your trip;

➧ Volunteer to help out at a local nature area. Conservation organisations are always looking for volunteers to help them restore and maintain their wildlife areas;

➧ Take the children to a local Natura 2000 site to discover its wildlife. These sites make wonderful outdoor classrooms, and encourage children and adults alike to follow healthy outdoor pursuits;

➧ Create your own little wildlife haven in a part of your garden or in a local green spot near you by planting native plants that are rich in nectar, creating a small pond, or making a woodpile for insects to hibernate in ...;

➧ Help support the local economy within and around Natura 2000 sites by buying local nature-friendly seasonal products that help maintain the habitats and species present in the area.

Which ever option you choose do share your experiences with others and encourage them to take an interest in Natura 2000 – afterall, this is Europe’s nature for you!
TO FIND OUT MORE ON NATURA 2000
LOG ON TO THE COMMISSION’S WEBSITE
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm
In most cases, only minor adjustments are needed to implement Natura 2000, but in some cases, more radical changes may be required. For example, in some areas where agricultural intensification or urbanization is changing the landscape, it may be necessary to transform a meadow into a commercial forest plantation. Such projects must be carefully assessed to determine whether they will have a significant negative impact on biodiversity. If the project is likely to have a significant negative impact and no viable alternatives exist, then it may be necessary to abandon the land in search of jobs elsewhere, with serious consequences for the local economy.

In Europe, after German reunification, the regional government of Thuringia declared significant parts a national park and Natura 2000 site in order to manage forests sustainably in eastern Germany. However, this decision was met with resistance from foresters fearing that it would prevent them from using the forest for economic purposes. Fortunately, the conservation authorities soon allayed their fears: the association managing forests sustainably in eastern Germany is now using within a Natura 2000 site.

The common crane migrates across Europe in search of resting, feeding and breeding grounds. After German reunification, the regional government of Thuringia declared significant parts a national park and Natura 2000 site in order to manage forests sustainably in eastern Germany. However, this decision was met with resistance from foresters fearing that it would prevent them from using the forest for economic purposes. Fortunately, the conservation authorities soon allayed their fears: the association managing forests sustainably in eastern Germany is now using within a Natura 2000 site.

In all cases, it is essential that those who live and work in areas where animals breed, feed or rest at certain times are involved in making Natura 2000 a success. Ambitious targets are best achieved by coordinating efforts, from deteriorating further or to help restore it to a healthy condition. Where species, including over one thousand animals and birds and over 190 particularly threatened species, are found, it is essential that those who live and work in those areas are involved in making Natura 2000 a success.

Agriculture development projects that involve use within a Natura 2000 site must be first assessed to determine whether the project is likely to have a significant negative impact and no viable alternatives exist. If the project is likely to have a significant negative impact and no viable alternatives exist, then it may be necessary to abandon the land in search of jobs elsewhere, with serious consequences for the local economy.

The cornerstones of Europe’s legislation on nature include the Birds Directive, which was adopted in 1979 and updated in 2009. This directive introduces similar measures to the Birds Directive, which is used within a Natura 2000 site. The directive includes support for best practice or schemes worth millions of euros in the period 2007–2013 for nature conservation. Thanks to this cooperation, the Azores is rapidly gaining an international reputation for whale watching.

In Finland, for example, the national Forest and Conservation Agency has been working closely with local communities and businesses to develop and implement nature-friendly practices. This has resulted in significant improvements in water quality, with a dramatic decline in the death tolls. Some birds have even taken to swimming in these clean waters. With time, it became evident that these hard fought for improvements were largely due to the cooperation of all parties involved. Yet, with time it became evident that these hard fought for improvements were largely due to the cooperation of all parties involved.

In the warm Mediterranean coastline, from the peaks of the Hainich to the Dehesas in Spain, rich meadows high up in the Alps, Bosnian jays in the Varde meadows, and the large copper butterfly and the pasqueflower in Scandinavia, to limestone pavements in England, from the Varde meadows, and the large copper butterfly and the pasqueflower in Scandinavia, to limestone pavements in England, all over Europe, examples already exist of how Natura 2000 can go ahead. It is now up to people, such as those who live and work in areas where animals breed, feed or rest at certain times, to be involved in making Natura 2000 a success.
As a result, Natura 2000, is not only safeguarding some of Europe’s nature – a valuable resource.

Every six years, Member States are asked to report to the Commission on the state of the habitats and species listed in Natura 2000. This is important to monitor the habitats and species listed in Natura 2000, as well as to assess the effectiveness of the protection measures in place.

For species and habitats under the Habitats Directive:

- Stage 1: The first step is taken by the Member states. Each country identifies sites that are important for the species or habitats listed in the Habitats Directive.
- Stage 2: The second stage involves an assessment of the sites identified in stage 1. This assessment is carried out by the Member states, and the results are used to identify sites that are of particular importance for the conservation of the species or habitats listed in the Habitats Directive.
- Stage 3: The third stage involves the designation of sites as Natura 2000 sites. These sites are then protected under the Habitats Directive, and the Member states are responsible for ensuring that the sites are managed in a way that is consistent with the conservation objectives set out in the Habitats Directive.

For species and habitats under the Birds Directive:

- Stage 1: The first step is taken by the Member states. Each country identifies sites that are important for the species or habitats listed in the Birds Directive.
- Stage 2: The second stage involves an assessment of the sites identified in stage 1. This assessment is carried out by the Member states, and the results are used to identify sites that are of particular importance for the conservation of the species or habitats listed in the Birds Directive.
- Stage 3: The third stage involves the designation of sites as Natura 2000 sites. These sites are then protected under the Birds Directive, and the Member states are responsible for ensuring that the sites are managed in a way that is consistent with the conservation objectives set out in the Birds Directive.

How do we know?

1. Through the use of scientific surveys and monitoring techniques.
2. By working with local authorities and communities to ensure that the sites are managed in a way that is consistent with the conservation objectives set out in the Habitats Directive.
3. By ensuring that the sites are managed in a way that is consistent with the conservation objectives set out in the Birds Directive.

The Natura 2000 Network – a European network of sites.

The Natura 2000 Network is a European network of sites that are important for the conservation of species and habitats. These sites are protected under the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, and they are managed in a way that is consistent with the conservation objectives set out in these Directives.

The Natura 2000 Network includes a wide range of sites, including:

- Coastal habitats
- Mediterranean scrub
- Arctic tundra
- Temperate deciduous forest
- Freshwater streams
- Marine areas
- Wetlands

The Natura 2000 Network is managed by the Member states, and it is the responsibility of the Member states to ensure that the sites are managed in a way that is consistent with the conservation objectives set out in the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

The Natura 2000 Network is an important part of the European Union’s efforts to protect Europe’s nature. It is a symbol of the EU’s commitment to protect biodiversity and to ensure that Europe’s nature is conserved for future generations.

The European Union’s efforts to protect Europe’s nature are reflected in the Natura 2000 Network. This network is an important part of the EU’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and it is a symbol of the EU’s commitment to protect biodiversity and to ensure that Europe’s nature is conserved for future generations.

Natura 2000 – a part of our living landscape.

The Natura 2000 Network is an important part of our living landscape. It includes a wide range of sites, including:

- Coastal habitats
- Mediterranean scrub
- Arctic tundra
- Temperate deciduous forest
- Freshwater streams
- Marine areas
- Wetlands

The Natura 2000 Network is managed by the Member states, and it is the responsibility of the Member states to ensure that the sites are managed in a way that is consistent with the conservation objectives set out in the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

The Natura 2000 Network is an important part of the European Union’s efforts to protect Europe’s nature. It is a symbol of the EU’s commitment to protect biodiversity and to ensure that Europe’s nature is conserved for future generations.

The European Union’s efforts to protect Europe’s nature are reflected in the Natura 2000 Network. This network is an important part of the EU’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and it is a symbol of the EU’s commitment to protect biodiversity and to ensure that Europe’s nature is conserved for future generations.

How can you do your part?

- Volunteer to help out at a local nature area.
- Buy local nature-friendly products.
- Support organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature.
- Vote for politicians who support the protection of Europe’s nature.

Volunteer to help out at a local nature area.

Volunteer to help out at a local nature area. This is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature, and it is a fun and rewarding way to spend your time.

Buy local nature-friendly products.

Buy local nature-friendly products. This is a great way to support local businesses, and it is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature.

Support organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature.

Support organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature. There are many organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature, and they need your support.

Vote for politicians who support the protection of Europe’s nature.

Vote for politicians who support the protection of Europe’s nature. This is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature, and it is a great way to ensure that your voice is heard.

ProtecTing THe bAT cAves of nor THern euroPe

The Bat Caves of Northern Europe are a network of caves that are home to a number of bat species. These caves are important for the conservation of these species, and they are protected under the Habitats Directive.

The Bat Caves of Northern Europe are managed by the Member states, and it is the responsibility of the Member states to ensure that the caves are managed in a way that is consistent with the conservation objectives set out in the Habitats Directive.

The Bat Caves of Northern Europe are an important part of the European Union’s efforts to protect Europe’s nature. They are a symbol of the EU’s commitment to protect biodiversity and to ensure that Europe’s nature is conserved for future generations.

The European Union’s efforts to protect Europe’s nature are reflected in the Bat Caves of Northern Europe. This network is an important part of the EU’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and it is a symbol of the EU’s commitment to protect biodiversity and to ensure that Europe’s nature is conserved for future generations.

A new Lease of life for A Rare endemic Fish

A new Lease of life for A Rare endemic Fish. This is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature, and it is a fun and rewarding way to spend your time.

Volunteer to help out at a local nature area.

Volunteer to help out at a local nature area. This is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature, and it is a fun and rewarding way to spend your time.

Buy local nature-friendly products.

Buy local nature-friendly products. This is a great way to support local businesses, and it is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature.

Support organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature.

Support organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature. There are many organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature, and they need your support.

Vote for politicians who support the protection of Europe’s nature.

Vote for politicians who support the protection of Europe’s nature. This is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature, and it is a great way to ensure that your voice is heard.

ProducTion of cork (eS)

The Production of cork (eS) is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature, and it is a fun and rewarding way to spend your time.

Volunteer to help out at a local nature area.

Volunteer to help out at a local nature area. This is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature, and it is a fun and rewarding way to spend your time.

Buy local nature-friendly products.

Buy local nature-friendly products. This is a great way to support local businesses, and it is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature.

Support organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature.

Support organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature. There are many organizations that work to protect Europe’s nature, and they need your support.

Vote for politicians who support the protection of Europe’s nature.

Vote for politicians who support the protection of Europe’s nature. This is a great way to help protect Europe’s nature, and it is a great way to ensure that your voice is heard.
Natura 2000 is the most ambitious initiative ever undertaken to conserve Europe’s rich natural heritage. It enables all 27 countries of the EU to work together to safeguard our most valuable wildlife and habitats across their natural range in Europe, irrespective of national boundaries. At its heart lies the creation of an ecological network of sites known as the Natura 2000 Network. Some 25,000 sites have been included in this network so far making this the largest network of nature conservation areas anywhere in the world.

Because Natura 2000 is an integral part of our countryside, it is important that the sites continue to be managed in a way that takes account of the vulnerable habitats and species present. The aim is not to stop economic activities but, instead, to set the parameters by which these can take place whilst safeguarding Europe’s biodiversity.

From the concerned citizen to private landowners and users, government officials and conservation groups – everyone has an important role in making Natura 2000 a success.

European Commission

Natura 2000 - Europe’s nature for you
Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities
2009 – 28pp. – 21 x 29.7 cm