Welcome to the May 2019 edition of the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process Newsletter!

We report here on the many events which have taken place over the last six months, as well outline the seminars and networking events we are currently planning. If you have any questions, comments or remarks about the content of this newsletter, please do contact us at natura2000platform@wur.nl

In this edition:

- Seminar news and updates
- Project focus: Freshabit LIFE IP
- Networking events for 2019
- 5 minutes with Els Martens
- News roundup
The Second Natura 2000 Seminar for the five marine biogeographical regions was held in Palma de Mallorca, Spain in November 2018. Over 90 marine experts from all EU maritime Member States discussed issues around setting conservation objectives, establishing favourable reference values and developing conservation measures to bring about change.

The workshop sessions and field trip to Cabrera Archipelago Marine National Park resulted in many interesting ideas, all of which have recently been distilled into a draft roadmap; a plan showing how thoughts and aspirations from the seminar can be turned into action. This plan includes ideas ranging from research on historic data and baseline conditions to workshops for detailed discussion of habitats and favourable reference values. But common to all working groups was an expressed need for better sharing of information, so that lessons learnt from best practice are available to all. A copy of the draft marine roadmap can be found here.
The development of the roadmap is only the start of a process, not the end. Having mapped a route, we need to begin to move along it. The first step in doing this is to identify priorities, what initiatives will deliver the largest conservation gain in the shortest time, and opportunities for early action or in other words if there is anything already planned that can help deliver. It was with questions like this in mind that the members of the Marine Expert Group, representing the EU Member States and stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directive in the marine environment, met in Brussels at the end of February.

The Group took the marine roadmap as a starting point. Discussions were held in three working groups based on regional seas: Baltic; Mediterranean and Black Sea; and Atlantic and Macaronesian, looking at the three themes that had guided the original discussions:

- Theme 1 – Setting conservation objectives at site, national and regional levels
- Theme 2 – Setting favourable reference values (FRVs)
- Theme 3 – Developing conservation measures to achieve the conservation objectives

Some immediate actions were volunteered. For example, representatives from Finland offered to explore hosting of a workshop on risk assessment for addressing pressures and impacts with the HELCOM secretariat and members. The wider group was also asked to complement the conclusions with further thoughts and ideas for action by the end of March and more feedback will be provided in the next Biogeographical Process Newsletter.

**Summary of seminar report and feedback analysis:**

Continual improvement is extremely important to us and we would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete our feedback forms. From this feedback we identified several elements of the seminar which many participants found enjoyable and informative in addition to elements which we will strive to improve upon. For more information on the outcomes of the seminar please download the seminar report.
Forthcoming Nature 2000 biogeographical seminars

Atlantic Seminar, 12-14 June, 2019, Antwerp, Belgium

The third Natura 2000 seminar for the Atlantic region will be held in Antwerp, Belgium, 12-14 June 2019. The main aim of the event, hosted by the Agency for Nature and Forests of the Government of Flanders, is to renew the Atlantic region road map, in order to produce a dynamic action plan with specific, detailed, follow-up events and programmes.

The seminar is based on discussion of four major themes, identified through pre-seminar expert consultation and a preparatory meeting of the Atlantic Seminar Steering Committee. These range in scope from a focus on species living in a specific habitat to a broad and overarching look at communication with priority stakeholders to encourage participation in Nature 2000 site management:

- **Theme 1** – Protection and conservation of meadow birds – on approaches to protect and conserve meadow birds (including outside Natura 2000) network.

- **Theme 2** – Integrated approaches to tackling nitrogen deposition – on approaches to tackling nitrogen deposition and reduce its impacts on the conservation status of habitats and species.

- **Theme 3** – Improving the conservation of Natura 2000 sites through integrated management – on the development of integrated management plans and planning for multiple benefits, such as flood protection and river restoration.

- **Theme 4** – Communication and stakeholder engagement in Natura 2000 – on approaches to initiate and continue communication, to resolve conflicts and to increase stakeholder engagement.

Each of these four themes has been identified as being of common interest across Member
States, offering opportunities for further exchanges and strengthening of transnational cooperation around Natura 2000. As well as workshops there will be excursions to:

- Fort of Steendorp and the Polder of Kruibeke;
- Cross-border park ‘Kalmthoutse Heide’; and
- Cross-border park ‘Groot Saeftinghe.’

Finally, a knowledge market will allow information on a range of projects to be shared, maximising opportunities for networking.

Further details are available at: Atlantic Seminar

---

**Boreal seminar, 14-16 October 2019, Tallinn, Estonia**

The Third Natura 2000 Seminar for the Boreal Region will take place from 14 to 16 October 2019. It will be hosted by the Estonian Government in Tallinn, Estonia. This biogeographical region involves five EU Member States: Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It is not often realised that the Boreal biogeographical region covers one fifth of the land area of the EU. This makes it about the same size as the terrestrial Mediterranean region and somewhat larger than the Atlantic region. It is also relatively rich in biodiversity.

While the themes have yet to be finalised, this event will provide an opportunity for policy officers, Natura 2000 managers, land owners, NGOs and other stakeholders from across the Boreal Region to meet and discuss key issues relating to the conservation of habitats and species, and management of human activities in the Natura 2000 network. The Boreal Seminar provides a platform for networking and joint action in line with the Nature directives.
Several workshops will be held, focusing on themes selected by the Member States, together with excursions to look at 'on the ground' examples of management issues and solutions. Themes are partly based on the habitat groups (forests, wetlands), as well as more cross-cutting themes like climate change, species protection and involving private land-owners in the implementation of Natura 2000 objectives. The key output from the seminar will be an updated roadmap for future conservation actions, with an emphasis on identifying collaborative projects that can benefit habitats and species across the Boreal region.

Further information is provided at: Boreal Seminar

Boreal Natura 2000 process field trip: Catchment-level co-operation for the benefit of Natura 2000 rivers

A field trip with a focus on freshwater and catchment restoration and management of freshwater Natura 2000 habitats was arranged in southern Finland from 3 to 4 October 2018. The trip focused on riverine habitats, especially coastal Natura 2000 river systems in southern Finland. Unfortunately, the Baltic countries were not represented, but there were three active participants from Swedish freshwater and nature conservation administrations.

The trip was arranged in two target catchments of the FRESHABIT LIFE IP project, namely the
rivers Karjaanjoki and Kiskonjoki, both with significant Natura 2000 coverage. The main issues tackled in these areas are river catchment land use and construction of dams that stop the migration of native fish. Another challenge for these rivers relates to their rapidly disappearing populations of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel.

Networking programme for 2019

Following our invitation, we received several proposals for networking events. Most applications involved both a request for funding and organisational support or facilitation of the workshop. In total, seven proposals were approved and will be supported in 2019, while four are still being discussed with the organisers or need to be confirmed.

Most networking events are planned for October or November 2019, and several have a focus on the marine biogeographical regions: clearly the marine seminar sparked many ideas for future cooperation! However, networking events with a focus on grasslands also stand out.

No proposals were received for the Macaronesian region, and we will actively seek opportunities to support an event during this year. We already welcome ideas for next year (for all regions), so if you have specific ideas or questions, do not hesitate to contact us at an early stage, so that we can see how to accommodate proposals, or combine them with other meetings.

In addition to the 2019 biogeographical seminars for the Boreal and Atlantic regions, the following events will be held during the coming months, and updates can be found on our website, or by following our Twitter account.
Semi-natural grasslands are exceptionally species-rich; they are a treasure of nature. However, their values are often neglected in man’s thinking from the perspectives of management of natural resources and policy measures – and even in assessing their economic value. The aim of the 16th annual Eurasian Grassland Conference is to show how central European semi-natural grasslands can fulfil important ecosystem functions and yet still generate income for their owners.

At the start of the Conference, a specific network event is being held, which will focus on how farmers use and manage species-rich grasslands without silage. It will explore what are the best practices for grassland management, and what are the important socio-economic conditions to conserve these grasslands (i.e. maintain favourable conservation status). We will explore the experiences through e.g. Life programmes, with species-rich grassland management, traditional management systems and how these have been adapted to current (modernised) management. The discussion will consider the conditions necessary for maintaining species rich grasslands, and what tools are available to maintain such grassland management; tools may include practices and traditions, financial tools (incentives), management tools, tools for monitoring, and extension services.

For further information, please visit the event [website](#).
A partnership led by the Conservatoire d’espaces naturels Normandie Seine and the European Commission is organising a workshop on Atlantic biogeographical calcareous grasslands from the 18 to 20 September 2019 in Rouen, France.

The aim of this event is to bring together scientists from other EU countries, Natura 2000 site managers and scientific and technical partners in order to share knowledge on conservation and management. The workshop will include conferences, roundtable discussions and a fieldtrip to a local chalk grassland.

The roundtables will discuss the following subjects:
- Conservation objectives (conversation status, scientific studies, threats, and management actions);
- Socio-economic benefits of calcareous grasslands (tourism, farming, and hunting);
- Feedback on preservation actions and territorial development.

The requirements to submit a paper for this event can be found here.
Recent networking events

ECOGYP Interreg project

ECOGYP is an Interreg project aiming to promote biodiversity conservation through reinforcing the links between Pyrenean actors and emblematic species of the natural heritage, in particular scavenger raptors (Bearded, Griffon, Black and Egyptian Vultures and Red Kite).

It includes activities to:

- Diagnose and value the ecological services provided by scavenger raptors and their habitats in the Pyrenees
- Create shared cross-border management strategies
- Bolster the links between scavenger raptors, their habitats, and human activities.

The most recent meeting was held on 19 March 2019 in Huesca, Spain. It covered the issue of poisoning and other sources of mortality. Further thematic seminars are being organised, details of which are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary feeding management Interactions</td>
<td>June 18-19, 2019</td>
<td>Son (Lérida) Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between vultures and husbandry</td>
<td>September 12, 2019</td>
<td>Aranzazu (Gipuzkoa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor activities and risks in sensitive breeding areas</td>
<td>September 2019 (to be scheduled)</td>
<td>Vitoria, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final conference</td>
<td>October 16-17, 2019</td>
<td>Pamplona, Spain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information please visit the event [website](#).
Eurosite’s fourth Natura 2000 monitoring workshop: the roles of new technologies and citizen science in Natura 2000 monitoring

Monitoring of habitats and species is a recurrent issue in the events organised under the Natura 2000 biogeographical process. Eurosite organised the fourth Natura 2000 monitoring workshop on: ‘The roles of new technologies and citizen science in Natura 2000 monitoring’, held in Doñana, Spain from the 9-11 April 2019.

The presentations focused on accessing and processing satellite imagery and products for use by site managers in Natura 2000 site monitoring. Suggestions included using drone imagery for Natura 2000 monitoring, and the roles of other new technologies and citizen science (for example, using open-source software for bird counts, using e-DNA by volunteers, developing phone apps to aid citizen science data capture).

With 50 participants, the workshop was very well attended. The biogeographical process support team and Eurosite facilitated the two afternoon workshop sessions on the use and uptake of new techniques for Natura 2000 conservation. The workshop report will soon be made available on the website soon.
Els Martens is a member of the Strategic Team for EU and international processes in the Agency for Nature and Forests, Government of Flanders.

She is also the National Contact Point in Belgium for LIFE Nature & Biodiversity.

- **What first got you interested in nature and forestry policy work?**
  My interest started when I began studying environmental science and marine ecology. My first job was in Kenya working for the Kenyan coastal policy department. Here I got my first look into coastal and wetland development and biodiversity action plans. After 14 years I returned from Kenya as I had an opportunity to work for the Belgian government to manage and incorporate environmental polices into development cooperation programmes. After this, I moved on to work for the Agency for Nature & Forests, Ministry of Environment Government of Flanders, working on the new environment and nature policy plan which had just begun. Here I continue to contribute to the development of action plans to implement nature and environment policy.

- **How did you become involved with Natura 2000 sites and their management?**
  When I started work in Flanders my boss at the time suggested I take over international issues relating to nature. Through community cooperation at the EU level relating to the Birds and Habitats Directives, I began working on the management plans for Natura 2000 sites. This started with me playing a role in coordinating the development of the first type of management plans for the various Natura 2000 sites in Flanders. This Natura 2000 site coordination is now taken care of by a team of dedicated individuals.

- **Why do you think it is important that Flanders hosts the next Atlantic Seminar?**
  Northern Europe, Flanders especially, is heavily urbanised which threatens many of the habitats
and species present in the Atlantic region. By hosting the upcoming Atlantic seminar we hope to raise awareness of the situation we currently face, increasing the ambition of scientists and policy makers in order to address this threat. I hope that our team will be inspired to work with other members of the community and will be able to learn from others to more effectively implement action plans in the field. We are also excited to network with and learn about other strategies from participants across the Atlantic biogeographic region.

- **What can you say to others who are thinking about hosting a Biogeographical Process event?**

Organising a seminar for the Biogeographic Process requires commitment and financial support from local agencies and governments. However, this should not dissuade any organisation from coming forward to host an event such as this. The opportunity to network with and learn from others who may be tackling similar issues to yours will benefit everyone involved.

- **What is your favourite Natura 2000 site?**

In Belgium, I would say the Sonian Forest [BE2400008]. The forest is a lovely place to visit and the way we are working together to enlarge this site and improve the awareness for the visitors is inspiring. In Flanders my favorite area is the Zwin estuary site [BE2501033]. As I started my studies as a marine ecologist there I am drawn to this site. Lots of good ecological work is conducted here including a number of LIFE projects. Overall it is a very nice system with many natural values to see, especially when the migratory birds are present.

- **Are you optimistic or pessimistic for the future of nature and wildlife in Flanders?**

We have to be optimistic and continue to try to get nature and biodiversity integrated into all other sectors. Showing that a healthy environment ensures many other natural systems which we rely on continue to operate effectively is vital. We must continue to raise awareness of the important role of nature to tackle climate change and ensure we can slow its progress where possible. In recent years it is clear that the youth care deeply for the environment around them which provides hope that they will continue to try to conserve the natural world.
Call for papers for the September networking event on Atlantic calcareous grasslands

The Conservatoire d’espaces naturels Normandie Seine, in partnership with the DREAL Normandie and the European Commission, is organizing a workshop on Atlantic biogeographical calcareous grasslands from 18 to 20 September 2019 in Rouen, France. The theme is on Development of social economic activities on Natura 2000 sites: Opportunity or threat to the preservation of calcareous grasslands? They are currently looking for projects to be highlighted during the event. Abstracts (400 words maximum) must be sent before the summer break, preferably by the first week of July 2019, to a.philippeau@cren-haute-normandie.com. (Please note that the 3 June 2019 deadline mentioned in the online call for papers is indicative.) Each presentation should not exceed 10 minutes in length and will be used to contribute to the discussions and roundtables. For additional information please visit the event website.

Support for peer learning between environmental authorities

For each Member State the Environmental Implementation Review has mapped the main challenges in the implementation of European environmental policy and legislation as well as existing good practices and points of excellence. By sharing these documents and comparing approaches there is a potential to improve environmental performance across the EU.

In order to reach this potential the EC has established a new, practical tool that facilitates peer-to-peer learning between environmental authorities: TAIEX EIR PEER 2 PEER. This programme provides tailored support to Member States’ authorities implementing environmental policy legislation. This tool will help to share good practice in environmental implementation and governance between Member States.

For more information please visit the commission’s website.
LIFE unites people for Nature

A new LIFE brochure has been published detailing the importance of the Biogeographical Process in supporting the designation and management of the Natura 2000 network. This brochure highlights how the sharing of knowledge from several LIFE projects has improved the management of habitats across the EU.

To view the brochure online, or to order a physical copy, please visit the publication page.

The Natura 2000 newsletter – let us know what you think

The Natura 2000 Newsletter (as distinct from this biogeographical process news) has been providing up to date information on activities, events and initiatives on the EU's biodiversity policy and the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives for more than 20 years. The Commission is carrying out a survey to find out whether it is still fulfilling the needs of its readers.

Your views are important! Please fill in the survey here.

The newsletter is published twice a year and is available for free in English, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Polish.

The Commission will be soon updating the subscriptions list, so if you wish to continue receiving the Natura 2000 newsletter in the future, please re-subscribe here.

New study published on identifying the key drivers of success for Natura 2000

Although the actions being taken to implement the Nature Directives, and the broader EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, the Member States’ most recent reports under Article 12 of the Birds Directive (for 2008-2012) and Article 17 of the Habitats Directive (for 2007 to 2012), indicate that substantial proportions of species and habitats remain threatened or have an unfavourable conservation status. On the other hand, some species and habitat types have shown an improving conservation status. For bird species, although negative trends still prevail, there have also been some remarkable recoveries. However, the formal reporting procedures offer little information on what underlies improvements in conservation status. So the European Commission asked the Institute for European Environmental Policy to lead a study to identify
the drivers of successful implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives. The study was published recently and can be downloaded [here](#). In brief, the key factors highlighted were:

- role of political support, governance, institutions and their staff
- role of land owners and other stakeholders
- role of the Natura 2000 network and other protected areas
- role of broad conservation measures
- approaches to tackling pressures in agricultural and wetland ecosystems
- funding and resources requirements.

---

**Roadmap progresses for cooperation under the Natura 2000 biogeographical process in the Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea regions**

The draft roadmap is based on the conclusions of the second Natura 2000 Continental, Pannonian, Steppic and Black Sea region Seminar, held Strasbourg, France in October, 2018. It brings together the expected outcomes and associated actions that were highlighted by the seminar participants as highly relevant to the development of cooperation across borders on Natura 2000 in these four biogeographical regions. Its purpose is to serve as a benchmark for the development of the Natura 2000 biogeographical process by the Commission, Member States and other stakeholders, the networking programme being at the core of the actions they put in place at a transboundary level to enhance the implementation of Natura 2000. The draft version was presented to the Expert Group on the Birds and Habitats Directives in late May for their review.

---

**Follow the Biogeographical Process on Twitter**

Since we launched our Biogeographical Process Twitter account in April the number of followers has been gradually increasing. We use it to promote seminars and networking events, as well as posting interesting findings from related projects (such as LIFE+ projects or the work of organisations working towards Natura 2000 objectives). We also upload pictures and daily blogs from Biogeographical Process meetings and field excursions. So, stay up to date and follow us on Twitter: [https://twitter.com/BioGeoProcess](https://twitter.com/BioGeoProcess)!  

---