

# natura

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION DG XI'S NATURE NEWSLETTER

Issue 8 • February 1999



Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica. Photo: Parque Nacional de Ordesa.

Europeans spend a lot of time worrying about disappearing fauna and flora in the South American forests and African savannas. We don't hesitate to give the countries concerned advice and financial assistance to help save these species from extinction. But what of our own 'European' household?

In 1992, Member States unanimously adopted a directive to save the most threatened habitats and species in the Union. Today, for the first time, a subspecies listed in this Directive is about to disappear forever. Only one individual from *Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica* is still alive and when it goes so will this typical ibex from the Pyrenees. It is not, therefore, an obscure lichen or insect that will disappear but a large mammal.

Despite the Spanish authorities' best efforts and financial support from LIFE Nature, this sub-species could not be saved, probably for lack of having taken action 20-30 years ago before its plight became desperate.

For those who are not indifferent to nature, there are two lessons to be learnt from this unfortunate event. First humility vis-a-vis the rest of the world, if we want to be credible in international conferences and conventions we must have an active policy for protecting our own wild species and natural areas in the European Union.

Next, a willingness and dynamism to manage future sites within the Natura 2000 Network, in close cooperation with local actors and interest groups. This is possible, as the work of project managers on the ground illustrates day after day (see pages 4–5: actions to save the marine turtles Caretta caretta). It is also desirable, as borne out by the Commission's proposal to continue its financial support for LIFE projects (see pages 2-3) for the period 2000-2004. And finally, it is already happening, as confirmed by the addition of new sites proposed by Member States for Natura 2000 (see the Natura Barometer, p.6)

But we must not loose time ...

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The NATURA 2000 Newsletter is produced by the Nature Conservation Unit of the Environment Directorate General (DG XI.D.2) of the European Commission. It provides regular updates on the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives and the establishment of the NATURA 2000 Network.

#### IN FOCUS

### LIFE-Nature: seeing Natura 2000 in action



Filming a documentary on the LIFE project 'Saline river sources of the Auvergne (France)'.

Last November, the Commission adopted a Proposal to prolong the LIFE financial instrument for a further five years¹ (2000–2004). Set up in 1992, this European Environment fund has co-financed some 347 nature projects across Europe so far, to the tune of 283 million ECU. The present article highlights the main elements of the Fund, reviews its close association with the creation of the Natura 2000 network and outlines what is likely to change under LIFE III.

#### LIFE Nature: what can be funded and how?

The EU has had a financial instrument to support nature conservation projects since 1984. At the start, only relatively small pilot projects could be funded but, in 1992, the Habitats Directive was

#### COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT LIFE-NATURE

#### Q: Only strategic European wide projects will be financed

If your site is a pSCI or SPA hosting species or habitat types listed under the Habitats Directive it is already of European importance and so eligible for funding!

#### Q: The budget is divided according to national quotas

No, there are no national quotas for LIFE-Nature. If a project is of high quality, of clear conservation benefit and sensitive to its socio-economic environment, it has every chance of being selected, irrespective of the number of applications received by that country or indeed the country involved.

#### Q: You need a specialist to fill in the application forms

If you have a clear idea of what you want to do on the site and how, then these forms will be relatively straight forward to fill in. They are designed to ensure that applications are carefully thought out and ready to be implemented — thereby increasing their likelihood of success and maximising their contribution to Natura 2000.

#### Q: the proposal needs to be written in French or English to stand a chance

There must be a one page summary of the proposal in English and French but the project itself can be described in the language of the proponent (provided it is one of the eleven official EU languages!) without prejudicing their chances of success.

#### Q: LIFE-Nature is only for those 'in the know'

A lot of effort is put into making LIFE-Nature as accessible as possible to all potential applicants across the EU. An information brochure and application form is produced every year in all Community languages, this is distributed by the national competent authorities and is available through the DG XI home page. Several Member States also hold, with the Commission, regular information seminars on how to apply to LIFE Nature.

adopted and the concept of the Natura 2000 Network launched. As a result, nature conservation became a major component of LIFE, disbursing some 40–50 million ECU annually to co-finance actions targeting the conservation of:

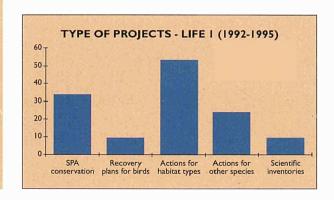
- sites proposed under the Habitats Directive (pSCIs) or
- sites classified under the Birds Directive (SPAs) or
- species, where their survival is dependant on more than protecting and conserving their existing habitats.

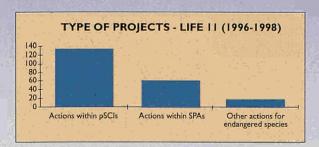
The Community's financial contribution is up to a maximum of 50% of the total cost (or, in exceptional cases, 75%). Co-finance ensures that there is a real partnership between the proponents and the EU.

Who applies for funds? Often it is public authorities, in particular municipalities, regional authorities and park administrations, who have a responsibility for implementing EU conservation legislation. But non governmental organisations represent a significant proportion of the beneficiaries too – as they often have the grass roots expertise required to carry out on site actions. In recent years, there has also been an encouraging trend towards partnership projects, involving conservation authorities, NGOs and other interest bodies.

# What sort of projects are funded and how have they contributed to Natura 2000?

Under LIFE I (1992–1995), because the Habitats Directive was in its early stages of implementation, it was important not only to be able to fund site related actions but also preparatory measures in different Member States to help with the onerous task of drawing up the national list of sites for the Natura 2000 Network. But by LIFE II (1996–1999), Member States were entering the next stage of implementation. Priority for funding was therefore given to projects involving practical on-site conservation actions within Natura 2000 sites.





Almost all major habitat categories and species have been represented within these projects, although more weight has been given to projects involving 'priority' habitat types or species, as referred to in the Habitats Directive. A significant proportion involve single sites where a whole suite of habitats and species of Community interest are represented. It may, for instance, not only address the conservation threats of a priority forest habitat (e.g. through establishing forest agreements with private owners) but also those of adjacent and outlying riverine habitats, meadows and grasslands (e.g. through removing invading scrub and restoring its hydrological integrity).

This type of approach, where the ecological integrity of a whole site is targeted rather than just some sections of it, means that the different land uses within an area are tackled integrally rather than on a piecemeal basis. The socioeconomic environment in which the projects operate is also therefore of paramount importance. Experience gained from past LIFE-Nature projects has shown that those who put particular emphasis on dialogue and consultation with the local communities are often also the most likely to succeed in conserving a particular site or species in the long run. In some cases, this can even turn out to be to the advantage of the local population who may generate additional income from conservation friendly agri-environment schemes, increased tourism (see pages 4-5) or even jobs.

There are circumstances, however, where conservation has to take precedence and often the only option left is land purchase, which remains a minor but essential part of many LIFE-Nature projects.

Not all projects funded under LIFE are single site initiatives though. Several have taken a more generic approach to the conservation of particular habitat types or species. In France, for instance, one '98 project alone targets 29 dry grassland sites across the whole of France, or in the UK, a '96 project focuses on 12 marine pSCIs around its coastline. Such strategic projects are able to benefit from exchange of experiences and so will have an important role to play in promoting best practice not only in that country but across Europe.

As far as species related projects are concerned, the above chart is somewhat misleading. In fact many more species orientated

projects were co-financed but as the actions involved first and foremost the conservation of their habitats they were classified as site related projects within pSCIs or SPAs.

Finally, although LIFE-Nature is a small instrument in EU terms, it is increasingly getting a reputation for high quality projects that are capable of generating larger scale and longer term programmes, fundable under other Community instruments – such as the agrienvironment Regulation, Structural funds or under national schemes.

#### LIFE III: what's new

Thus, over the last years LIFE-Nature has played an important role in:

- pump priming initial heavy investment costs that make the long term conservation more affordable;
- promoting dialogue with the other land users of a site to find ways to conserve an area;
- providing high profile demonstration models of how conservation objectives for particular habitats and species of Community interest can be achieved in practice.

As a result, LIFE-Nature's demonstrative and catalytic role in terms of the Natura 2000 Network is now well established. The Commission's intention is therefore to continue with the present strategy under LIFE III and not to introduce any fundamental changes to eligibility or funding procedures.

Some improvements have however been proposed:

- introducing the possibility of 'starter' grants, i.e. making funds available to prepare project proposals that involve partners in several Member States. It is hoped that this will encourage more European initiatives to be submitted
- stimulating 'co-op' measures, i.e. providing funding to facilitate exchange of experiences between on-going projects on specific practices;
- opening up LIFE to accession candidate countries of Central Europe
- and finally, bringing forward the deadline for applications to 31 October (instead of January) each year in order that projects can start by the following April (instead of July), and so incorporate a full field season in the first year of the project;

The LIFE III proposal is now under discussion in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Adoption is foreseen by this autumn.

More information on LIFE-Nature projects is available on the nature homepage: http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg11/nature/

<sup>1</sup> Com(1998) 720 final of 9.12.98

#### ON SITE

# Sun against Moon – can tourists and turtles share the beaches?



The loggerhead sea turtle, an endangered species in the Mediterranean. Photo: STPS

A moonlit night on the Greek coast. A newborn turtle pops its head out of the sand and scurries across the beach to plunge into the warm sea. Same place, some hours later. Bright sun, blue sky, brilliant water. Just what the tourists thronging the beach wanted. Holiday means taking it easy, so local entrepreneurs have obligingly provided umbrellas, deck chairs, taverns and even accommodation on the beach.

For thousands of years, loggerhead turtles (Caretta caretta) have been hatching from clutches of eggs buried in beach sand. In the last few decades, they have been joined by sunseeking holidaymakers. These invaders can unwittingly trample on the eggs buried in the sand, or smash them by off-road 'fun' driving. Their campsites, umbrellas and deck chairs can also destroy eggs, and even when they don't, their shade may, by cooling the sand, affect the sex of turtle embryos, which is determined by sand temperature. Guesthouses and bars on or near the beach attract people day and night, and their

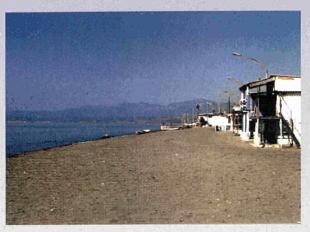
Sea turtle project sites in Greece.



lights disorient the newborn turtles, who use moonlight, or even the fact that the nocturnal horizon is brighter over sea than over land, to find their way. Is this the beginning of the end for the turtles?

# Discovered by coincidence

Greece is the most important breeding area for the loggerhead turtle in the Mediterranean.



Illegal summer houses along a beach in Lakonikos bay. Photo: STPS

About 3,000 clutches of eggs are laid every year between May and August, when the adult turtles crawl out of the sea to scoop nests in the beach sand for their eggs. Incubation takes 45–65 days. However, only 1–2 out of every 1,000 hatchlings survive to maturity. Even then, they can fall victim to accidental entanglement in nets or killings by fishermen. To breed, turtles return to the beach where they were born, which means that a declining population cannot be replenished by turtles from elsewhere.

Yet not until 1977 did the scientific world realise that Caretta caretta breeds in Greece, when a young man camping on a beach at Zakynthos discovered a few hatchlings which had just come out of their eggs and were heading for the sea guided only by the moon. He went on to help found the Sea Turtle Protection Society (STPS) in 1983, which, besides significant work at Zakynthos (co-financed by the EU through ACNAT, a forerunner to LIFE-Nature), did a complete inventory of loggerhead turtle breeding sites in Greece. Six important ones were found: Zakynthos, Cephalonia, Rhodes, Crete (Chania, Messara and Rethymno) and two bays in the Peloponnesos. Building on this basis, STPS has been involved in three LIFE projects targeting specific breeding sites in Crete (1995–97) and in the Peloponnesos: Lakonikos Bay (1997–2000) and Kyparissia Bay (1998–2001).

#### A simple strategy of success

In these projects, STPS uses a well-structured, tried and tested strategy with two main objectives: reduce turtle mortality and increase people's awareness.

Clutches of eggs are fenced or moved to improve breeding success. Beach patrols, including many European volunteers, watch over the nests and hatchlings, meanwhile collecting data on factors which influence turtle biology. Adult turtles are tagged to evaluate any connections between populations from different beaches. A target whose importance was recently identified through the Lakonikos project, is close collaboration with fishermen to try to reduce the number of adult turtles caught in nets and killed.

All STPS actions are accompanied by an intense public awareness campaign with two target groups: visitors and owners of buildings along the beaches. There is a permanent presence of STPS staff on each site, particularly during the egglaying and hatching season (late May to October), to provide guidelines on protecting eggs and turtles to visitors and hotel/guesthouse owners. Selling T-shirts, stickers etc. to tourists helps STPS in its constant endeavour to self-finance its activities as much as possible.

In so doing, STPS has reached out and made thousands of visitors aware of the vulnerability of the turtle species, becoming known throughout Europe via the tourists who return home and spread the word about the 'turtle people'. Through these information campaigns the LIFE projects have also managed to get many hotel owners involved in simple but effective remedial actions, such as dimming or covering artificial lights near the beach to prevent hatchling disorientation. In all three LIFE projects, STPS tries to collaborate closely with local stakeholders such as tourism operators, landowners, fisheries associations and local authorities. At the same time it strives to improve the legal framework for protection of sites and populations and prepares management plans.

#### The Pandora's box of visitor demand

Meanwhile, tourist demand is generating an increasing need for infrastructure. Shelters, guesthouses, taverns and bars, most without a proper licence, used to pop up like mushrooms on or next to the beaches until a few years ago. The closer they were to the beach, the more they were appreciated by the visitors. Fortunately, this trend has stopped lately thanks to the intervention of local authorities and lobbying by NGOs such as STPS. Nevertheless, the illegal constructions are still on the beaches, attracting visitors day and night, degrading the habitat and spreading fake 'moonlight'. There is vehement socio-political debate in Greece about removing illegal constructions. Several local authority representatives now dare to take this bull by the horns.

#### So, how many sea turtles have been saved?

In the three sites covered by the LIFE projects, 1,270 clutches of eggs were protected and more than 104,000 hatchlings reached the sea in 1998 alone. Less than one third would have done so in the absence of protection measures. The three

#### A private guesthouse which helps itself by helping turtles

'Niriides', a family-owned guesthouse near a nesting beach in Lakonikos Bay, participates actively in turtle protection. Upon registration, all guests receive a brochure (published by STPS) on Caretta caretta with rules to respect at the beach. During the hatching period, the lights closer to the beach are turned off, so as not to disorient hatchlings. The manager himself makes sure that all clients respect the 'turtle rules'. According to him, most guests are thrilled by the idea of staying in a guesthouse next to a turtle nesting beach, and usually comply with the rules. Once, however, he was obliged to send away some 'undisciplined' guests. Why is 'Niriides' so much involved in the protection of loggerheads? As the manager put it, 'even these animals have soul; at the same time, wherever you find sea turtles you find clean beaches and tourists'.

LIFE projects make 520 presentations to hotels annually and about 130,000 tourists are informed about Caretta caretta and how they can personally contribute to its survival. Furthermore, the fishermen in Lakonikos Bay, who prior to the LIFE project used to kill most turtles entangled in their nets, liberated more than 60 juvenile and adult loggerheads in 1998.

The immediate effects of LIFE are evident. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to quantify the long-term impact of these projects on turtle populations, as the animals only return to the beach where they hatched when they are mature, 20-30 years later. Thus only the grandchildren of the young man who discovered that Caretta caretta nests in Greece, will be able to assess what the protection of hatchlings today means for the population's breeding success tomorrow.



LEFT STPS volunteers placing a protective grid on a sea turtle nest in a beach of Lakonikos bay. Photo: STPS

RIGHT Fisherman releasing a juvenile green turtle, after its accidental capture in his nets, in Lakonikos Bay. Photo: STPS

If you want to volunteer to help turtle conservation, or would like more information on this project, please contact:

Ioulia Sioris **STPS** Solomou 35 106 82 Athens, Greece Tel + fax 00-30-1-3844146 E-mail: stps@compulink.gr The website of all major Greek NGOs is http://www.forthnet.gr/ volunteersfornature/

#### NATURA BAROMETER

(as of 26/1/99)

Member State	Birds Directive SPA Classification					Habitats Directive Proposed SCIs (stage 1)				
	Number of SPAs	Total area (km²)	Area Maps	Information	Progress	Number of sites proposed	Total area (km²)	Site maps	Natura 2000 forms	National list
België/Belgique	36	4,313	×	×		102	913	*	*	A
Danmark	Ш	9,601		*		194	10,259	*	*	A
Deutschland	551	14,121	×	×	*	602	8,704	*	×	1
Ellas	52	4,965	*	*	*	230	25,745	*	*	A
España	170	33,191	×	×	*	588	70,250	*	×	Y
France	112	7,794	*	×	<b>®</b>	652	15,200 <sup>(1)</sup>	×	×	1
Ireland	109	2,226	**	×	*	48	542	*	*	1
Italia	202	9,472		*	<b>0</b> 1	2,480	49,304	*	*	A
Luxembourg	13	160	**		<b>()</b> 1	38	352	×	0	*1
Nederland	28	3,448	*	×	*	76	7,330	*	*	Y
Österreich	58	11,333	×	×	***	90	9,215	*	*	A
Portugal	36	3,323	*	*	3	65	12,150	*	- **	4.
Suomi	439	27,500	*	*	<b>®</b> ↑	1,380 <sup>(2)</sup>	47,500 <sup>(2)</sup>	*	*	*1
Sverige	302	22,820	*	0	<b>*</b> 1	1,923	45,642	*	×	¥1
United Kingdom	187	7,718	*	×	*	333	16,885	*	*	Y
EUR 15	2,406	161,985				8,801	319,991(2)			

<sup>(1)</sup> Data for some sites missing

Notes: Several Member States have designated significant parts of their coastal waters. Certain sites have been, totally or partially, proposed under both Directives. Only sites that have been formally and definitively proposed are taken into account in the Natura barometer. Some Member States have however also transmitted provisional lists of sites; these are given in brackets.

Keys: no or insignificant classification list insignificant or not transmitted no transmission classification notably insufficient partial but insufficient national list incomplete information or partial transmission classification incomplete substantial national list but complete for transmitted sites information still incomplete classification complete complete national list according to Member computerised and coherent State, information transmitted is coherent for transmitted sites ignificant progress since last Natura barometer

For further information contact: Micheal O'Briain, DG XI.D.2 for SPA classification and Fotios Papoulias, DG XI.D.2 for proposed SCIs.

<sup>(2)</sup> This figure is an estimate

#### **NEWS ROUND UP**

# The Natura Barometer: commentary on progress

Things have been moving fast since the last Newsletter:

- Finland submitted its national proposals for Natura 2000. There are now 1380 pSCIs and 439 SPAs. A number of sites are subject to an appeals procedure at the Supreme Administrative Court but the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive still apply to all sites.
- Luxembourg has taken a big step by proposing a substantial national list of pSCIs and in making significant additions to its SPAs.
- Further progress was made by Germany (+227 pSCIs) and France (+109 pSCIs), while Sweden proposed another 474 pSCIs as well as classifying 27 SPAs, each one adding, as a result, around 3.500-4.500 km² to the total surface area covered by its pSCIs.

#### Corrigendum:

The fax and email coordinates given in the last newsletter for the TERRA publication on financial instruments for the Natura 2000 Network were incorrect. These should be tel/fax: +34 918586827; e-mail: terra@quercus.es

# The 1999 LIFE Application Round

This year's budget is set at 67 million EURO. The Commission is currently evaluating applications received by the deadline of 31 January and will inform all proponents of their decision as regards funding in July.

## Practical management of heathlands

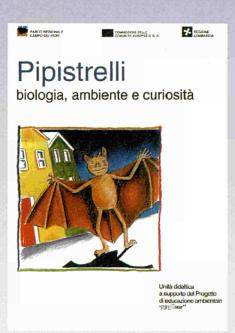
An international seminar on the management of heathlands in North West Europe was held in Brittany (France) from 28–30 October as part of a LIFE-Nature project run by three NGOs in France and the UK. The aim of the seminar was to report on the experiences gained in the management of lowland

heathland, including work undertaken under the LIFE programme for two priority types: wet heaths and dry coastal heaths. Sessions were held on practical methods and techniques of management, restoration and recreation as well on more socioeconomic related issues, such as links with the farming community and the potential for agrienvironment schemes to promote long term management. Seminar proceedings will be published in the spring. Contact SEPNB, 186 rue Anatole-France, F- 29276 Brest Cedex, Fax +33 02 98 45 08 42

# Land reforms can benefit conservation

In Sweden, tradition has it that property passed down from one generation to another is split amongst the heirs. As a result, much of the land today is either too small or too scattered to be used for such activities as forestry or farming. To combat this problem, the small parish of Gagnef in Central Sweden launched a land reform programme in 1996. During the survey work, they discovered several areas of natural forests of high conservation value, which they wished to conserve. A local-foundation was set up and a successful bid made to LIFE-Nature to raise funds for their purchase and subsequent management.

The project gave rise to 13 new Natura 2000 sites and generated much local interest for the conservation of natural forests. In many ways, the project can be considered exemplary as it illustrates how a strong local movement can use an economic opportunity in a positive way for the benefit of both nature conservation and commercial forestry. A well presented Swedish-English final report telling the story of the Gagnef project is now available. Contact Ove Persson, Stiftelsen Gagnefs Naturvardsfond, Gagnefs kommun, Box 1 SE- 780 41, Gagnef, fax +46 241 15101.



# A new board game to help save Italy's bats

It has to be said that bats are not the world's cuddliest creatures, a large dose of imagination is therefore required to captivate people's hearts and minds and enlist their support for the plight of these animals. In the Lombardy region of Italy, the Campi di Fiori nature park, has, with LIFE-Nature funding, come up with a new board game destined for local schools and villages. The game corresponds to a bat's annual lifecycle and the children work their round the board by answering questions on its life history and conservation. The game comes complete with teacher's notes and information about the nature park. Contact Consorzio di gestione del Parco regionale Campo di Fiori, via Piave 2, IT- 21030 Brinzio fax +390 332 435.403; e-mail campfior@skylink.it

#### Bearded Vulture workshop

LIFE-Nature is currently funding four projects on the conservation of the bearded vulture, *Gypaetus barbatus*, in the Spanish Pyrenees (Aragon), Crete and Continental Greece, Corsica and the French Alps. A first workshop was held in Crete from 21–24 November to consider how best to adopt a common strategy for this species amongst the LIFE-Nature projects. Emphasis will be placed on sharing technical experience and

#### **NEWS ROUND UP continued**

coordinating public awareness initiatives, such as videos and technical guides, which would benefit from being undertaken on a European scale. The next workshop will be held in June in France.

Contact Prof. Moysis Mylonas, Natural History Museum of Crete, University of Crete PO Box 2208, GR-71409

Heraklion, Crete. Tel/fax: +30-81-324366, e-mail nbmc\_dir@cc.uch.gr

# Natura 2000 in Belgium and the Netherlands

The well-established Dutch language scientific journal for nature conservation "De Levende Natuur" devoted its last issue to the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in the Netherlands and Belgium. Altogether, some 15 articles are presented (in Dutch with English summaries). Subjects include: a review of both Directives, an explanation of how they are being implemented in these two Member States, facts about the habitat types and species present in both countries, and an overview of how Life-Nature intervened in the conservation of threatened fauna and flora. Copies can be ordered at: Abonnmenten-administratie De Levende Natuur, Noordereinde 60. NL- 1243 JJ 's-Graveland; Price f15,-/ 250 BF.

# Natura 2000 Awards for excellence in management

1999 marks the year that the NGO – Eurosite – will launch two new awards for excellence in conservation management. The first will be a Natura 2000 Award (for sites designated a Special Protection Area under the Birds Directive), the

second will be a Management Award (for sites not formally Natura 2000). The prize is 3,500 Euro. Applications should be sent in by the 2nd April (20th anniversary of the Birds Directive). For more information and an application form contact RSNC, The Green, Witham Park, Waterside South, Lincoln LN5 7JR, UK; fax: +44 1522 511 616

#### LIFE-Nature Websites

Several LIFE projects have begun to create their own web-sites. You may be interested in having a look at this first selection. If you are responsible for such LIFE-Nature web-sites please let us know, we will publish regular updates of new sites in this Newsletter:

- Restoration of the Galachos SPA, Spain http://www.aragob. es/ agri/ama/galachose.htm (in Spanish)
- Liminganlahti wetland, Finland http://www.vyh.fi/ppo/limlahti/ life/llahti.htm (in Finnish)
- Sefton Coast sand dunes project, UK http://www. merseyworld.com/sclife/ (in English)
- A conservation strategy for the freshwater fish 'saramugo',
   Portugal http://www. malhatlantica.pt/saramugo/ (in Portuguese and English)
- Conserving the Asper in the Rhone river http://members. aol.com/apronfr/life.htm (in French and English)

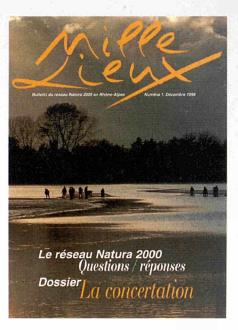
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#### A request to all editors

Do you publish a national, regional or local newsletter on Natura 2000? Are you a public administration, interest group or association ...? DG XI would like to hear from you and would appreciate being added to your mailing list! This will help the Commission to facilitate exchanges of experience between Member States and regions.



#### **NATURA 2000 NEWSLETTER**

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