



natura

EUROPEAN COMMISSION DG ENV NATURE NEWSLETTER Issue 12 • September 2000



Wetland restored after opencast mining. Photo: M. Pajard, Ecosphere

UNDERSTANDING AND DISCUSSING ...

There has been many a debate over the plight of the bear, and whether, for instance, it should be allowed to roam the mountains and forests of Europe. At the end of the day though, it is the Member State who decides on the most appropriate measures to maintain this species in a 'favourable conservation state' in accordance with the terms of the Habitats Directive.

Other species and habitat types may not be so famous but they are no less important when it comes to preserving Europe's biological diversity. The fate of endemic fish of Rhodes (see page 5) for instance, or the characteristic flora of Valencia (see page 8–11) will remain highly uncertain, unless more effort is made to study them. Only then can their conservation be taken into account

during the local development plan stage.

The newly approved financial instrument for LIFE III should help to further this process by continuing to finance a selection of the best projects across the 15 Member States of the Union and in 5 candidate countries. "LIFE-Nature allows techniques to be tested and brings people together who may otherwise not have known of each other's existence. It is a school for policy integration" as Margot Wallström reminded us during her interview in the last newsletter.

Looking beyond the 300–400 LIFE-Nature projects currently underway, it is the whole network of Natura 2000 sites that has to be taken into account when considering land use priorities. Thanks to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (page 2–4) Member States are armed with a common procedure for understanding, debating ... and deciding!

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The NATURA 2000 Newsletter is produced by the Nature Conservation Unit of the Environment Directorate General (DG ENV.D.2) of the European Commission.



Ancient gravel pits along the Seine Valley after restoration.
Photo: J.C. Kovacs, Ecosphere

The Habitats Directive: Key concepts of Article 6

Eight years after the adoption of the Habitats Directive and despite a faltering start, the Natura 2000 network of sites is now finally beginning to take shape. Over 360,000 km² and 10,000 sites have been put forward so far, representing 10% of the EU territory. Now the time has come to determine how to protect and manage these sites in practice, giving due consideration to their socio-economic environment.

Article 6 is amongst the most important of the twenty four articles in the Directive, since it determines

Ancient gravel pits along the Seine Valley before restoration.

Photo: J.C. Kovacs, Ecosphere



the relationship between conservation and land use. Yet, it also appears to be the one which has raised the most questions. The Commission has sought to provide Member States with guidance on the interpretation of the key concepts of this Article through the publication, in April, of a document entitled 'Managing Natura 2000 sites – the provisions of Art. 6 of the Habitats Directive'. This is based on the experiences gathered so far and on existing jurisprudence. As such, it is intended to give informal and non-binding advice, since it is ultimately up to the Member States to choose the most appropriate ways to implement practical measures for specific sites.

Structure of Article 6

Before highlighting some of the main issues covered by the document it may be worth recapping on the structure of article 6: Article 6(1) makes provisions for the establishment of the necessary conservation measures, and is focused on *positive and proactive* interventions. Article 6(2) makes provision for avoidance of habitat deterioration and significant species disturbance. Its emphasis is therefore *preventive*. Article 6(3) and (4) set out a series of *procedural* and substantive safeguards governing plans and

projects likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. Within this structure it can be seen that there is a distinction between article 6(1) and (2), which define a general regime and Article 6(3) and (4), which define a procedure applying to specific circumstances.

Scope

Thus, articles 6(1) and (2) apply to Natura 2000 sites at all times. The Commission considers that their provisions should target the species and habitats for which the site has been designated – ie those identified in the Standard Data Forms submitted by the Member States as significant. The aim is not to set up a general conservation regime for the whole site but rather to take measures focused on the species and habitats, which justified the selection of the site.

This should nevertheless be done in an integrated fashion. In this respect, management plans are

ARTICLE 6 AND SPAS

As regards Special Protection Areas classified under the Birds Directive Article 6(1) does not apply. There are however analogous provisions in the Birds Directive which offer the sites a similar level of protection. Article 6(2), (3) and (4) on the other hand do now apply fully to SPAs as well.

recommended which may be 'integrated into other development plans'. As many questions have been raised about the contents of such plans, annex II of the document provides a number of useful pointers, together with a list of LIFE-Nature projects, which have produced management plans or introduced other statutory, administrative or contractual measures to manage their sites.

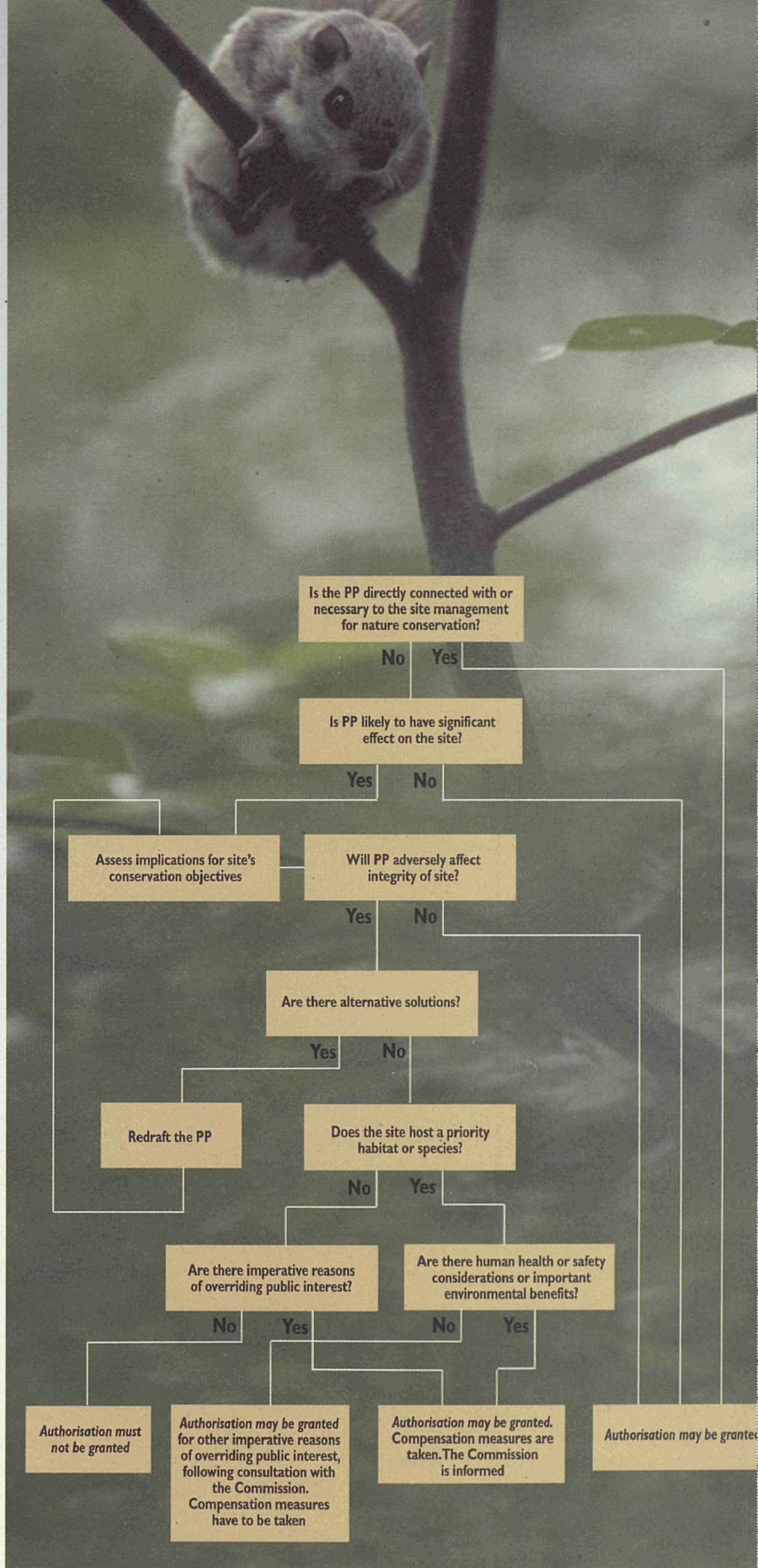
Whatever measure is finally used, its aim must be to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of the habitat types and species of Community interest. In terms of assessing whether this has been achieved, the Commission argues that this needs to be done at both individual site level and at the overall network level. The Directive talks of determining conservation status over the natural range of the species or habitat but because the ecological coherence of the Network is dependent upon the contribution of each individual site, an assessment at site level will also always be necessary.

In terms of avoiding habitat deterioration or significant species disturbance, article 6 (2) introduces a number of safeguards. These provisions act permanently on the sites and concern any past, present or future (albeit predictable) activities – intentional or otherwise. They also apply to actions that may not necessarily require prior authorisation: e.g. agriculture or fishing. Nor are they restricted to those located within the SAC. If external events outside the boundary impact negatively on the species and habitats inside the SAC, then preventive measures must also be taken in this case.

Handling possible impacts

Unlike the previous paragraphs the provisions of articles 6 (3) and (4) only apply to circumstances involving *new* plans or projects which may impact on the site. They define a step-wise procedure for considering whether these plans or projects may or may not be allowed (see illustration).

The Commission recommends a broad interpretation of a plan or project within the context of article





Motorway under construction.
Photo: J.C. Kovacs

6 (3), irrespective of its size or cost. The term 'project' should include both construction works and other interventions in the natural environment. The term 'plan' should include land use plans and sectoral plans or programmes but leave out general policy statements.

The safeguards set out in 6(3) and (4) are triggered not by a certainty but by a likelihood of significant effects on the species and habitats for which the site is designated. Thus, in line with the precautionary principle, assessment must be undertaken even if the effects are not certain. The Commission recommends using Directive 85/337/EEC¹ as a reference since it lays down a useful methodology for carrying out an impact assessment, including a list of factors to be considered. Although not an obligation under Art. 6(3), it is also useful at this stage to look at possible alternative solutions and mitigation measures. The latter, in particular, may make it possible to ascertain that the plan or project will not adversely affect the site, provided that certain measures are put in place.

Defining overriding public interest

If on the other hand the effects are significant then the procedures laid down in Article 6 (4) come into play. Being a derogation from Article 6(3) this provision has to be interpreted in a restrictive way, so that its application is limited to circumstances where all the conditions required are satisfied.

The first step is to examine whether any alternatives exist. This responsibility rests with the competent national authority. If it turns out that there are no feasible alternatives, then the next step is to examine the existence of imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

This last concept is not defined in the Directive, but the Commission considers it reasonable to assume that this refers to situations where the plans or projects envisaged prove to be indispensable – for instance, actions within the framework of fundamental policies for the State and Society or those which fulfil specific obligations of public service. By the same token, plans or projects that are entirely in the interest of companies or private individuals would not be considered, nor would those that yield only short-term benefits for society.

Compensation

Finally, if all the above conditions are fulfilled then comes the question of how to compensate for the loss of the site so as to maintain the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 Network. Again, there is little jurisprudence on this matter to help guide Member States but the Commission considers that certain conditions must be respected as regards compensation measures, which should:

- be additional to the normal practices of implementation of the 'Nature' Directives,
- address, in comparable proportions, the habitats and species negatively affected,
- concern the same biogeographical region in the same Member State,
- provide functions comparable to those which had justified the selection criteria of the original site,
- be operational at the time the original site is being damaged unless it can be proven that this simultaneity is not necessary to ensure the integrity of the Natura 2000 Network.

Timing

As to the question of when Article 6 comes into effect, the Commission recommends using the Court case on

the Santoña Marshes as a basis. This ruled that a Member State could not escape from its duty to protect a site which, according to relevant scientific criteria, deserved protection, by not classifying it as an SPA. Thus, Member States should ensure that sites on their national list of proposed Sites of Community Importance are not allowed to deteriorate before the Community list of SCIs is adopted. The same advice applies to a site, which on the basis of the scientific criteria of the Directive, clearly ought to be on the national list.

Conclusions

These are just some of the issues covered by the interpretation document. Future case law and experience with implementing Article 6 may reveal new or other dimensions which will help to further the understanding of this crucial article. In the meantime, the Commission has also launched a study to prepare methodological guidance on how to perform assessments and deal with alternatives and compensation measures. This should be ready by the end of the year.

¹ Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Directive 97/11/EEC

The full document 'managing Natura 2000 sites – the provisions of Art. 6 of the Habitats Directive' can be downloaded from the DG ENV website (address on back page of this newsletter).

European Commission



Managing Natura 2000 sites

The provisions of Article 6 of the "Habitats" Directive 92/43/EEC



April 2000



Photo: Alexis Zoumbouloglou.

Ladigesocypris ghigii Pisces, Cyprinidae

Did you know that this little freshwater fish, which is listed as a priority species under the Habitats Directive, has the dubious honour of being one of Europe's most endangered aquatic animals? – not so surprising perhaps when one considers that it is only found in one artificial lake and two freshwater streams on the Greek island of Rhodes. Here, it lives an almost anonymous life, using all of its 9 cms to chase after its daily diet of insect larvae and plankton. Not much more is known about it than that.

Its threats, on the other hand, are rather clear cut: the population found in one of the streams – the Loutanis – is at greatest risk during the dry summer months when the local demand for water increases dramatically. As the water levels diminish, through active pumping, so do the chances of the fish surviving to wetter days. A similar situation is found in the other stream – the Gadouras – which suffers from poor water quality. What is more, if plans are allowed to go ahead to build a dam on this stream, the whole population will probably be wiped out. The problem in the artificial lake of Apolakkia is of an altogether different nature. Here the *L. ghigii* is having to compete for its food, brought on by the introduction, in 1995, of a number of non-native fish species.

Help may be at hand though, a LIFE-Nature project was launched in 1998 to address these main threats within two of the sites, proposed as a Site of Community Importance for inclusion to the Natura 2000 network. However, even then, one cannot get away from the fact that, with such a low population and restricted range, the species remains extremely vulnerable to possible disaster scenarios. Another important element of the project will therefore be to set up an artificial breeding stock, to eventually repopulate new locations, and so increase its chances of survival.



(as of 1/8/00)

Nota Bene:

- The Natura Barometer is based on the information officially transmitted by Member States.
- Numerous sites have been designated according to both the Birds and Habitats Directives, either in their totality or partially; the numbers given may therefore not necessarily add up.
- The % in surface area is indicative. It relates to the total surface area, terrestrial and marine, in relation to the terrestrial surface area of the Member State. Various Member States (DK, NL, ...) have designated substantial portions of their coastal waters.
- Certain Member States have proposed large areas including "buffer zones" while others have only proposed the core areas. In both cases Article 6 of the Habitats Directive also applies to new activities which are foreseen outside a Natura 2000 site but likely to affect it.
- The global assessment of national lists may be revised, upwards or downwards, following more complete scientific analysis of the data, particularly at the relevant biogeographical seminars.

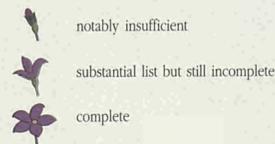
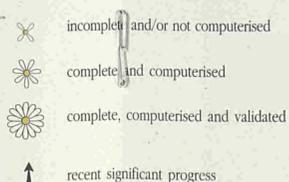
| Member State | Birds Directive | | | | | | Habitats Directive | | | | | | Member State |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| | Number of sites classified | Total classified area (km ²) | % of national territory | Site Maps | Natura 2000 Forms | Assessment of SPA classification | Number of sites proposed | Total proposed area (km ²) | % of national territory | Site maps | Natura 2000 forms | Assessment of national list | |
| België/Belgique | 36 | 4,313 | 14.1% | ✂ | ✂ | | 102 | 913 | 3% | ✂ | ✂ | | België/Belgique |
| Danmark | 111 | 9,601 | 22.3% | ✂ | ✂ | | 194 | 10,259 | 23.8% | ✂ | ✂ | | Danmark |
| Deutschland | 577 | 16,264 | 4.6% | ✂ | ✂ | ↑ | 1,495 | 14,406 | 4.0% | ✂ | ✂ | ↑ | Deutschland |
| Ellas | 52 | 4,965 | 3.8% | ✂ | ✂ | | 234 | 26,522 | 20.1% | ✂ | ✂ | | Ellas |
| España | 181 | 34,934 | 6.9% | ✂ | ✂ | | 867 | 88,076 | 17.4% | ✂ | ✂ | | España |
| France | 115 | 8,127 | 1.5% | ✂ | ✂ | | 1,028 | 31,440 | 5.7% | ✂ | ✂ | | France |
| Ireland | 109 | 2,236 | 3.2% | ✂ | ✂ | | 267 | 3,091 | 4.4% | ✂ | ✂ | | Ireland |
| Italia | 268 | 11,279 | 3.7% | ✂ | ✂ | | 2,507 | 49,364 | 16.4% | ✂ | ✂ | | Italia |
| Luxembourg | 13 | 160 | 6.2% | ✂ | ✂ | | 38 | 352 | 13.6% | ✂ | ✂ | | Luxembourg |
| Nederland | 79 | 10,000 | 24.1% | ✂ | ✂ | ↑ | 76 | 7,330 | 17.7% | ✂ | ✂ | | Nederland |
| Österreich | 73 | 11,931 | 14.2% | ✂ | ✂ | | 127 | 9,066 | 10.8% | ✂ | ✂ | | Österreich |
| Portugal | 47 | 8,468 | 9.2% | ✂ | ✂ | | 65 | 12,150 | 13.2% | ✂ | ✂ | | Portugal |
| Suomi | 440 | 27,500 | 8.1% | ✂ | ✂ | | 1,381 | 47,154 | 13.9% | ✂ | ✂ | | Suomi |
| Sverige | 304 | 23,787 | 5.3% | ✂ | ✂ | ↑ | 1,962 | 50,996 | 12.4% | ✂ | ✂ | ↑ | Sverige |
| United Kingdom | 202 | 8,524 | 3.5% | ✂ | ✂ | ↑ | 340 | 17,628 | 5.5% | ✂ | ✂ | | United Kingdom |
| EUR 15 | 2,607 | 182,089 | | | | | 10,683 | 368,747 | | | | | EUR 15 |

The Natura Barometer: commentary on progress

- Since the last issue, two countries have made notable progress in terms of sites of Community importance under the Habitats Directive: Germany added some 370 new sites (+3,450 km²), mainly from three Länder. The national list nevertheless remains substantially insufficient for this country. Sweden proposed 43 additional sites, which represent a surface area of nearly 4,700 km² and approximately 10,000 km² of water surfaces. A few new sites were also added by Ireland and Austria.
- Under the Birds Directive there has been very significant progress made by the Netherlands, which has classified a further 49 SPAs. This has resulted in an almost threefold increase in the size of the Dutch SPA network bringing its total surface area to approximately 10,000 km². There has also been welcome progress in Germany (24 new sites, 22 of which are in Hessen, covering 2,451 km²). A few new sites were also notified by Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.



For further information contact: Micheal O'Briain, DG ENV.D.2 for SPA classification.



For further information contact: Fotios Papoulias, DG ENV.D.2 for proposed SCIs.





Volutaria lippi. INSET *Verbascum thapsus*.
Photos from the Flora of Valencia CD ROM



Plant conservation: the dawning of a new era? ...

'Pansies, lilies, kingcups, daisies, let them live upon their praises.... (William Wordsworth). Flowers and plants have inspired artists, poets and musicians throughout the centuries. But when it comes to conservation, it seems the only role they can play without impunity is that of Cinderella. Neglected and almost forgotten, plants have been out of the limelight for too long now. But, if the handful of floristic projects funded under LIFE-Nature is anything to go by, things may finally be changing.

With almost half of the threatened plant species listed in annex II of the Habitats Directive restricted to the Mediterranean region, it won't come as any surprise to learn that most of these projects are located in the Southern part of Europe. And that they have many features in common (see box). But one in particular – involving the establishment of a network of floristic micro-reserves in Valencia, Spain – stands out as a possible model for the future.

Arguably one of the richest botanical regions in Europe, Valencia harbours over 3000 flowering plants and ferns, of which 60 are endemic to the area. But, as elsewhere, their survival is heavily threatened by a combination of factors. These range from a booming tourist industry, which not only 'eats up' land but also consumes precious water supplies, to dramatic and sudden shifts in agricultural practices – causing an abandonment of extensive agro-pastoral practices in favour of more intensive cultures, such as citrus and rice. Swift action was therefore needed to rescue several plants from the brink of

extinction, including 13 species listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive.

Good preparation is the key ...

An inventory, undertaken prior to the start of the LIFE-Nature project, identified over 150 sites harbouring threatened and endemic plants in need of urgent attention. It also revealed that most were less than 2ha in size and confined to rocky outcrops, ravines, cliff tops, small pools etc.... This is typical of many such species in Europe, which are found, not in climax situations, but rather in marginal unstable biotopes strongly influenced by over 5000 years of human presence. The conservation objective of the project was thus to protect "marginal flora" under prevailing conditions of relative instability.

Legislation provides the necessary framework

This was to be done first and foremost through a system of micro-reserves, and complemented by actions, such as land purchase, in core areas of prime botanical interest. Thus, in 1994, just after the start of the LIFE-Nature project, a law was passed establishing the micro-reserve as a new legal identity under Valencian law. This concept was considered much more pragmatic and adaptable to the particular needs of plants than the classic solution of nature

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE-NATURE PLANT PROJECTS

- Target several plant species at once;
- Focus on restricted populations (point endemism), often consisting of a few individuals;
- Take place in small project areas – often consisting of clusters of protected sites;
- Combine ex situ and in situ conservation measures to enhance populations;
- Gather additional scientific data needed to prepare recovery plans;
- Put heavy emphasis on public awareness to boost the low profile of plant species.

reserves or individual recovery plans (see box).

Thereafter, additional decrees were adopted to allocate funds for compensation and on-site actions within these reserves. Also, to help speed up the process of designation each site had to have a management plan, which was agreed upon by the stakeholders and the scientists. Given the wide array of species, land use prescriptions varied considerably: preventing further expansion of arable land inside micro-reserves, forbidding the use of fertilisers, re-routing paths to prevent trampling, reducing grazing pressure, etc..

Winning around local landowners

Because so many endangered plant species grow on privately owned land, the Valencian authorities focussed particular attention on persuading private landowners to join this new scheme. This meant not only negotiating for a part of their land to be dedicated on a voluntary basis to 'nature' but also encouraging them to undertake some of the on-site conservation actions themselves, with funding from LIFE. The intention was to make the land-owners feel they were an integral part of the programme – a sort of "protagonist for nature conservation".

This strategy appears to have worked well, for although the regional government provided financial compensation to the owners, it seems that the pride associated with "owning" a micro-reserve and contributing to the conservation of endangered species was viewed as a greater reward. The project has therefore clearly succeeded in creating much goodwill for conservation measures amongst local land-owners. This will hopefully help the process of acceptance of the Natura 2000 Network in the rural areas.

Complementing the micro-reserves with other essential measures

In view of the rarity of some species and the low population numbers, the project also promoted a well-balanced mix of *in situ*

(field) and *ex situ* (laboratory) measures. As a typical *in situ* measure, seed would be collected in a micro-reserve and sown in small plots to test the most appropriate germination procedure and to enhance the populations in their natural environment. However, some plants are such poor seed producers that they need a little *ex situ* help. With the support of the Instituto Valenciano de Investigaciones Agrarias (IVIA), a research institute specialised in citrus culture, several threatened species were multiplied *in vitro* before being re-introduced to the wild.

This procedure led to the outstanding recovery of *Cistus heterophyllus* subsp. *carthaginensis*. In 1990, only one specimen was left in the wild but by 1998 the plants had produced enough seed *in vitro* to be re-introduced to the areas where it originally occurred. Now the population is strong enough to produce its own seed in its natural environment.

Giving plants 'a hard sell'

The final cornerstone of the project was a well-focused information campaign to raise the otherwise low profile of plant conservation and to encourage a continuous transfer of plant information from the conservation scientist to the site managers or the public at large. To this end a whole panoply of well designed brochures, posters, videos and CD Roms were produced and every opportunity was used to promote the objectives of the project, both regionally and internationally.

Other innovative measures included the construction of a rock garden in the Botanical Garden of Valencia, which has since become a showcase for the region's flora, attracting over 100,000 visitors a year. Half of these are school children who are brought here to learn how the geography of the western Mediterranean Basin contributed to the floristic diversity of the region.

WHAT IS A MICRO-RESERVE?

- Generally 1–2 ha in size (always smaller than 20 ha) with a concentration of rare, threatened or endemic species.
- The designation of a micro-reserve is entirely voluntary but irreversible; the land owner may keep the land title, but must accept a management plan to protect the target species.
- Its designation does not include all the other restrictions which are automatically imposed by a statute of "nature reserve" this makes it easier to establish.
- The goal is over 250 micro-reserves.
- Until now, the micro-reserves network concerned flowering plants, but in the future it will be extended to include marine areas as well as micro-reserves for mosses, lichens and mushrooms.

Photo: G. Raeymaekers, Ecosystems LTD



ON SITE continued

Where to go from here

By the end of this LIFE project 156 micro-reserves had been surveyed and designated and a further 80 were pre-selected for inclusion in the micro-reserve network. Consequently, about 60% of the endemic flora of Valencia is now protected, via some 750 ha of micro-reserves. In terms of SCI designation, 50% were proposed by the end of the project; and the Government has committed itself to proposing the remainder by the Autumn. Interestingly, over 80% of the Annex I habitat types present in Valencia also occur in these reserves, prompting a further LIFE-

Nature project to protect 17 priority habitat types in 38 proposed pSCIs in Valencia.

Other more substantial Community funds are also being successfully tapped into. The micro-reserves around Sinarcas are being integrated in a rural tourism development plan co-financed by the EU structural funds and a FEOGA project has recently been set up to further protect Valencia's botanical diversity in agricultural areas.

But perhaps, at the end of the day, it will be the demonstration role of this project that will stand out most, not only for having used imaginative means to raise the profile of plant conservation but

also for proposing pragmatic solutions. At a recent Planta Europa Conference, for instance, it was decided to explore the possibility, of creating a pan-European network of micro-reserves for plants, on the basis of the experiences of the LIFE-Nature project in Valencia.

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School children in the Valencia Botanical Gardens. Photo: E. Laguna



website:

http://www.gva.es/comal/Planificacion_Gestion_del_Mediod_esp_prin.htm



OTHER LIFE-NATURE PROJECTS TO PROTECT THREATENED PLANT SPECIES*

- 1994** Conservation of natural habitats and plant species in Corsica (France)
Restoration, conservation and management of threatened flora in Andalucía (Spain)
- 1996** Protection of *Jurinea cyanoides* in steppic grasslands near Volkach (Germany)
Conservation of 13 endangered plant species in Aragón (Spain)
- 1997** Conservation of threatened flora of the Canary Islands (Spain)
- 1998** *Asphodelus bento-rainhae*: conservation and management measures (Portugal)
Conservation of rare fern and salamander species in Valongo (Portugal)
Recovery of areas with threatened flora in the Sierra Nevada (Spain)
- 1999** Protection of priority plant species on the Aeolian islands (Italy)
Conservation of Madeira's priority and rare plant species (Portugal)
The protection of *Narcissus angustifolius* in the Dumbrava Vadului reserve (Romania)

* More information on these projects can be found of DG Env's website – the address is given on the last page

LIFE III is adopted

The Council and the European Parliament have finally reached an agreement on the LIFE III financial instrument, setting the financial envelope to be allocated to this five-year programme at 640 Million Euro. As far as the deadline for submission of applications is concerned this will be the 31st October 2000 for LIFE-Nature. The application forms and information brochure on how to apply are now available on DG Environment's website (see address at the bottom of page 12).

New Standard Administrative Provisions governing LIFE projects

The standard administrative provisions, which need to be respected whilst undertaking a LIFE project, have been harmonised for LIFE III. These will now be common to all three elements of the LIFE programme whether Nature, Environment or Third Countries. Amongst the new provisions it is worth noting the following: the payment modalities have changed to 40%-30%-30%, all budgets and claims will have to be submitted in Euro; the respective roles of beneficiaries, partners, sub-contractors and co-financers have been clarified; bank guarantees are no longer required for NGOs, voluntary work is no longer an acceptable cost. For the full text, please consult the back of the LIFE application brochure on DG Environment's website.

Progress on biogeographical seminars

The first biogeographical seminar for the Continental region was held on the 23 March in Belgium. This biogeographical region is of special importance for the protection of many habitats as it contains 71% of all priority habitat types listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive. Some progress was made on identifying those species and habitat types for which designation was insufficient at this stage. But as the national list was very incomplete for

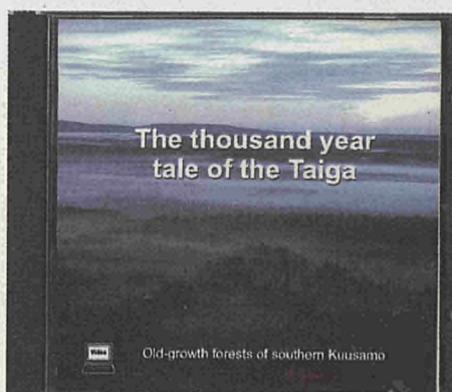
Germany, which represents 45% of the surface area of this region, the exercise had a rather limited scope. Forthcoming biogeographical meetings include the 2nd Alpine meeting in Italy and the 2nd Atlantic meeting in the Netherlands, both of these will be held in early 2001.

Naconex exchange

The NACONEX project is coordinated by Pro-Natura (Sweden) in partnership with Avenir (France) NEPCon (Denmark) and the Corporation of London (UK). The project aim is to develop conservation training and to spread knowledge and skills across Europe, using the Natura 2000 Network as a framework. This will be achieved by running training courses, developing a glossary of conservation terms in different European languages and setting up a website to keep people in touch. Interested? *Contact Pro Natura, Halnagården, 545 93 Töreboda, Sweden fax +46 506 143 01, email: naconex@pro-natura.net or consult the web site: www.pro-natura.net/naconex.*

A thousand year tale of Western Taiga

Old growth forests in southern Kuusamo, Finland, have a fascinating history. Almost untouched by man for centuries, these western taiga habitats have been left to their own volition, influenced only by natural catastrophes such as storms and fires. To gain an insight into this intriguing world, why not watch the newest video and CD Rom produced by the LIFE-Nature project



on the protection of Kuusamo. This tells the tale of a thousand year old pine over its entire life span. Upon its demise it releases its nutrients back into the undergrowth and so provides a new lease of life for a host of other plants and animals. And so the cycle continues ...

Contact: Tupuna Kovanen, North Ostrobothnia Regional Environmental Centre, Section of Nature Conservation, PO Box 124, FIN-90101 Oulu. Tel: +358 8 3158300; Fax: +358 8 3158305.

Conserving the wolf in Greece

In 1997, the very first Greek conservation initiative for the wolf, *Canis lupus*, was launched through a LIFE-Nature project run by the NGO Arcturos. Information before the start of the project on this species was very poor and population estimates put the numbers at no more than 300 individuals. Now, thanks to this ongoing LIFE project, a more accurate estimate can be made on the basis of extensive fieldwork and interviews with stockbreeders. This puts the present figure at around 500-700 individuals. What is more, according to Arcturos, population trends for this species in Greece are stabilising and even, in some cases, increasing. *Contact Yorgos Iliopoulos, Arcturos, V. Hugo 3, 546 25 Thessaloniki, Greece. Tel +30 31 554 623; Fax +30 31 553 932; email: arcturos@the.forthnet.gr*

Symposium on restoration of traditionally used semi-natural grasslands

Several LIFE-Nature projects focus on the restoration of semi-natural grasslands. Many have a similar design involving a labour intensive restoration phase, such as felling and scrub clearance, and sometimes complemented by soil preparation. Once the restoration work is complete, future and long-term management, e.g. through grazing or haymaking has to be secured, often with the help of the agri-environment schemes. These were just some of the issues discussed at a recent symposium on the Swedish

island of Öland in June. Organised as part of the LIFE-Nature project on the restoration of Stora Alvaret in Sweden, the event provided an opportunity for exchanging practical experiences in restoration techniques and in setting appropriate grazing levels. As a follow up an informal network of contacts will be set up so that practitioners and administrators alike can continue to exchange views and experiences. *Contact: Susanne Forslund, Länsstyrelsen Kalmar, S-391 86 Kalmar, Sweden. Fax: +46 48082153, email: susanne.forslund@b.lst.se*

Conference on Marine pSCIs: Partnership in action

Protecting the key nature conservation interests of marine pSCIs is a complex task. These areas tend to be of high economic value and are heavily used for a whole range of different functions – fisheries, recreation, industry etc ... What is more, comparatively little is known about their ecological requirements. That is why the statutory conservation agencies in the UK launched an ambitious four year LIFE-Nature project to establish demonstration management schemes on 12 marine pSCIs around the British coastline (see issue 4 of this newsletter). As the project comes to an end, the beneficiary intends to organise a Conference to share its experiences and best practice techniques with others.

The conference will be held on 15–16 November 2000 in Edinburgh. Key agenda items include: understanding sites – the scientific challenges; building partnerships on sites; management actions and plans;

future leads. The event should provide an important opportunity for all those closely involved in the management of marine pSCIs in the UK and other European countries to reflect on priorities for future action. French translation will be provided. *Contact John Torlesse, UK Marine SACs project, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA, UK. Tel +44 1733 455308; fax +44 1733 568834, email john.torlesse@english-nature.org.uk or consult their website: <http://www.english-nature.org.uk/uk-marine>.*



Marine SACs: Partnership in Action

15th - 16th November, 2000

Edinburgh Conference Centre

A conference on establishing management on UK marine Special Areas of Conservation



LIFE-Nature websites

Continuing with news of the latest project websites:

- Aapa mires in Lapland and Ostrobothnia, Finland: <http://www.vyh.fi/lap/life/kansi.htm> (in Finnish and English)
- The wild forest reindeer in Finland: http://www.mkj-jco.fi/m_yhrpeura.htm (in Finnish, Swedish and English)
- Habitat conservation in Apulia's Adriatic coast – the Rauccio project <http://comune.lecce.it> (in Italian, English under construction)
- Conservation of alluvial forests in Ried de l'Ill at Selestat, in the French Alsace region – <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/ill-wald> (in French only)
- The Swedish Environment Protection Agency has established a website for all Swedish LIFE-Nature and Environment projects: <http://www.environ.se/dokument/omverket/ekostod/ekodok/life/lifeprojekt.htm> (in Swedish only).

The Nature Conservation unit has moved

DG Environment is finally reunited in one building. The new address of Unit D.2 – “Nature Conservation, Coastal Areas and Tourism” is:

European Commission
 DG ENV.D.2 – BU-9 3/204
 Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat, 200
 B – 1049 Bruxelles/Brussel

Phone and fax numbers as well as E-mail addresses do not change.

NATURA 2000 NEWSLETTER

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This newsletter is produced three times a year and is available in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian. To be included in the mailing list, send your name and address to DG ENV.D.2, BU-9 3/204, European Commission, 200 Rue de la Loi, B-1049, Brussels. Fax: +322 296 9556. Alternatively you can consult DG ENV's homepage: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/home.htm> where you will find this newsletter and other documents relating to the EU's conservation policy.

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Printed on Cyclus®Print 115gr/m² 100% recycled paper.

Design: Nature Conservation Bureau, UK.



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 L-2985 Luxembourg