



natura

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Sport fishing in the Merenkurkku Archipelago, Finland. Photo: Seppo Lammi

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE AT LAST ...

After a rather long democratic gestation period the LIFE baby has finally arrived – and is in fine form! The Commission presented a proposal for a Regulation back in December 1998 but it was not until early July 2000 that the Council and the European Parliament finally adopted LIFE III, having gone through a conciliation procedure between the two institutions.

LIFE III will run from 2000 to 2004 and will have a total budget of 640 million euro. 47% of this will be allocated to nature conservation. New provisions have been introduced, for instance, the fund has been opened up to candidate countries to the EU. Also, there are two new accompanying measures for LIFE-Nature: 'starter' projects aimed at encouraging the preparation of proposals involving partners from several different Member States; and 'co-op' measures intended to stimulate exchanges of experience between projects.

From now on, nature projects will have to be submitted by the end of October every year. The selection phase will take place over winter, and the Commission will publish the list of projects to be funded in the spring. That way, LIFE-Nature beneficiaries will be able to start their activities on site earlier than would have been possible under LIFE II (co-financing was announced in July). This should in turn enable the first field season to be under way in year one already.

Nevertheless, in renewing their support for the LIFE instrument, both the Member States and the European Parliament insisted on the need for beneficiaries to be reliable both on a technical and a financial level, and for projects to be realistic and coherent with those actions undertaken through the Structural Funds.

It is for each of us – LIFE-Nature beneficiaries, national nature conservation administrations and Commission services – to ensure the best use of the money that has been put at our disposal for the good of Europe's natural heritage.

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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.



ABOVE *Discreet hides along the shore of Steinhuder Meer, a pilot site from the European Charter for sustainable tourism.*
Photo: Naturpark Steinhuder Meer



RIGHT *Bieszczady National Park, Poland.* Photo: M. Thauront

Looking for new opportunities

Now that Natura 2000 is beginning to take shape, people's attention is increasingly drawn to the long-term management of these areas. As the previous 'in focus' article on the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive illustrated, Natura 2000 management is essentially about influencing land use. But for the most part this is perceived as a restriction. Certainly, the species and habitats for which the site is designated must be safeguarded. But Natura 2000 need not be just about constraints, it can also mean new opportunities – for instance in the area of tourism.

This was the main subject of a recent seminar organised by the European Commission on 'sustainable tourism and Natura 2000' in Lisbon in December 1999. Attended by around 130 people from both the tourism sector and the nature conservation sector, the objective was to investigate, by

means of best practice examples and workshops, ways of combining tourism development and the conservation of N2000 sites to the mutual advantage of both.

The positive role of tourism

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, generating, on average 6% of Europe's GDP, and employing a significant proportion of its workforce. Much of this has so far taken the form of 'mass tourism' centred on coastlines and mountain areas where its impact on the environment, has, on the whole, been devastating.... mass infrastructure, burgeoning visitor pressure, increased pollution etc.... But, as more and more people are working less hours and take shorter but more regular holidays, there is an increasing appetite for more specialised forms of tourism, such as 'eco-tourism'. Amongst the factors that may account for this shift are a better environmental awareness and a greater need for visitor satisfaction.

How then can this trend be turned to the advantage of Natura 2000 sites? Tourism can play several positive roles. For instance, it can help raise awareness amongst tourists and locals for the need for conservation; it can also contribute to the local economy by providing an additional attraction or source of revenue. This, in turn, may not only encourage a greater acceptance of the protected area within the local community but also raise additional funds for the conservation of the site itself.

Factors of success

This is not to say that all Natura 2000 areas are suitable for tourism. Several factors should be carefully investigated beforehand. The first, most obvious, consideration is whether the area can tolerate an influx of visitors – and, if so, where, when and how much? Defining carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change are vital if the impact of tourism is to be contained. Sometimes determining the type of attraction is enough to

ensure that nature and tourism can go hand in hand. On the small island of Terschelling, in the Netherlands for instance, visitor numbers have recently increased to over 360.000 a year. Yet the island's natural values are still in favourable condition thanks to careful planning and subtle visitor manipulation.

An example of how this was achieved is illustrated by a 15 km bicycle track constructed around the nature reserve away from the core areas. The route is paved for the first 2 kms, which is enough to satisfy the pleasure seekers (70% of visitors). It then becomes a dirt track, which fulfils the needs of the more adventurous nature lovers (20% of visitors), and, finally, it becomes an overgrown footpath along which only the most determined naturalists (10% of visitors) are likely to venture.

Involving local communities

Another important consideration is that tourism should be based on partnerships and participation of all interest groups. It is after all a multi-disciplinary sector, there is little point developing trails around a nature reserve if there is no easy access to the site or if the facilities, accommodation, restaurants etc... in the surrounding area are few and far between and of poor quality. Many of the case studies presented at the conference in Lisbon last year stressed that early involvement of the local community was a key to success. But to be able to do so the conservationists themselves must also be able to explain the ecological requirements of the Natura 2000 sites in layman's terms.

Farm tourism along the Loire valley. Photo: M. Thauront



PRINCIPLES OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CHARTER

- Respect the limits of carrying capacity
- Contribute to heritage conservation and enhancement
- Preserve natural resources
- Support the local economy
- Promote the involvement of local residents
- Develop appropriate high quality tourism
- Make protected areas accessible to everyone
- Develop new forms of employment
- Encourage behaviour that respects the environment
- Serve as a model for other economic sectors and influence their practices

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Natura 2000, it appears, remains relatively unknown outside the world of conservationists.

Placing Natura 2000 in its regional context

Finally, a third point to consider is whether the nature reserve is, in itself, enough of an attraction to sustain tourism. People may come for day trips to enjoy a particular site but if income is to be generated for the local community, it is important to find ways of keeping people in the region for longer, for instance by diversifying the attractions and providing quality products. This means situating the Natura 2000 site in a regional geographical context.

Precisely such an initiative was initiated for the Grebenzen eco-model nature park in Austria. Conservation, recreation, education and regional development were put on the same footing in this objective 5b area in order to

develop an integrated eco-tourism model. A whole panoply of different initiatives were developed with, and by, the local communities (involving 70 farmers and 50 innkeepers). These included direct farm sales of organic produce, naturepark restaurants, visitor paths, thematic walks, a nature bus, workshops etc.... The fact that these initiatives were coordinated meant that the whole delivered a lot more for tourism in the region than the sum of the individual parts.

Guidelines for sustainable tourism

Finally, with all these factors to be taken into consideration, the participants at last year's seminar asked themselves whether or not it would be opportune to develop guidelines for sustainable tourism in Natura 2000 areas. The conclusion was that, rather than create new guidelines, existing ones could be used and adapted instead. Two initiatives, in particular, were considered especially appropriate for Natura 2000.

The first is the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism developed by the EUROPARC Federation. Participation in this Charter is both voluntary and contractual. It commits the signatories to applying the principles of sustainable tourism (see box), through the development of a 5 year strategy and action plan for the site involving both the park organisations and the tourism



Turtle nesting beaches in Crete.
Photo: K. Sundseth, Ecosystems LTD

service providers. The Charter is currently being tested on 10 pilot areas.

The second initiative – PAN Parks – is being promoted by WWF and the Molecanten Group (a Dutch leisure company). Central to the PAN parks concept is that nature can become a driving force for healthy economic development in rural areas of Europe. As such, it aims to provide a nature based response to the growing market of eco tourism, and so transform perceived threats into opportunities.

To receive the PAN Parks quality label the areas concerned

PAN PARKS DRAFT PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA

Principle 1: Protected areas are important for wildlife and habitats, and representative of Europe's natural heritage. Parks have to be large enough to maintain vital ecological processes and a viable population of threatened species

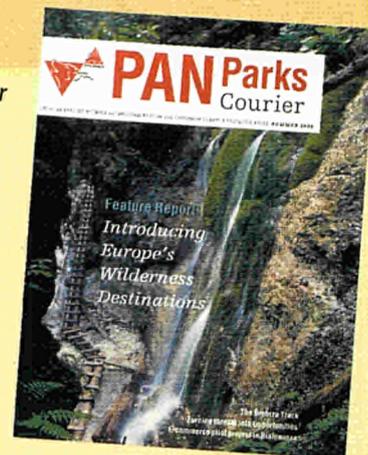
Principle 2: management of the park maintains and restores ecological processes and biodiversity in natural ecosystems

Principle 3: visitors are offered good information, services, facilities and the opportunity to experience the natural features of the area whilst respecting the conservation objectives

Principle 4: relevant partners aim at achieving a synergy between nature conservation and sustainable tourism by elaborating a sustainable tourism development strategy, committing to it, and jointly taking responsibility for its implementation

Principle 5 covers the criteria for commercial partners to ensure that nature orientated tourism brings long-term benefits and jobs to local communities surrounding the protect area

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(minimum size of 10,000 ha) must be able to meet the strict principles and criteria of the scheme (see box). The emphasis is on parks with high standards for nature protection, which can offer a variety of nature-based activities and facilities without causing disturbance to wildlife. Like the Charter, areas must have developed a strategy for

conservation and sustainable tourism development in collaboration with the relevant interest groups. The initiative is currently being tested by 17 parks through a self assessment process.

Conclusions

Both schemes are presently in their testing phase but it was generally agreed that these could eventually be adapted for the Natura 2000 Network. In the meantime, the best practice examples, as well as other guidelines and the general discussion points presented at last year's seminar have been placed on DG Environment's website (address at bottom of page 12). It is hoped that these examples will not only provide additional sources of inspiration for both the tourism sector and the conservation sector but also stimulate greater dialogue between the two.



LEFT Archipelago National Park, Finland, a PAN parks pilot site.
Photo: Leif Lindgren



Photo: Erich Wederkinch, Vestsjaelland County

***Bombina bombina* – the fire-bellied toad**

Aptly named for its brilliantly coloured underbelly, which it uses to warn off predators, the fire-bellied toad leads an otherwise unassuming life in and amongst its sheltered sun-exposed ponds. Its favourite habitats are the extensively grazed meadows on calcium-rich soils in central and eastern Europe. The adults hibernate on land, but spend most of the spring and summer months in their breeding tarns. At these times the air is filled with the melodic but mournful sounds of its mating calls.

Unfortunately, these areas are also ideal for intensive agriculture. Crossing from one pond to another therefore becomes a life-threatening event, pesticides and fertilisers will most likely desiccate the animal if the plough doesn't get there first. Added to this is the problem that the ponds are also under constant threat from drainage, eutrophication and overgrowth due to lack of grazing. *Bombina bombina* populations are, as a result, increasingly isolated as their habitat becomes ever more fragmented. Consequently, the risk of a population being wiped out overnight due to unexpected catastrophes, such as adverse weather conditions, is very real.

It won't come as a surprise therefore to learn that the fire-bellied toad is now on the priority list of species under the Habitats Directive. Efforts to try to reverse this trend are nevertheless underway in most EU countries. In Denmark for instance, a major programme has been launched, with the help of LIFE-nature funding, to protect the species in 7 of its 8 remaining sites along the coastal areas of Southern Denmark. Work will not only focus on restoring the existing ponds and their surrounds but also on creating new 'reserve' ponds. Spawn from captive-bred animals will be introduced to these in order to establish new colonies. Only by expanding its range is there a chance of bringing this species back from the brink.



Photo: Birgit Bjerre Laursen, Fyn County

(as of 14/11/00)

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%				209	1,105	3.6%				België/Belgique
Danmark	111	9,601	22.3%				194	10,259	23.8%				Danmark
Deutschland	617	21,672	6.1%			↑	2,196	20,434	5.8%			↑	Deutschland
Ellas	52	4,965	3.8%				234	26,522	20.1%				Ellas
España	260	53,602	10.6%			↑	937	90,129	17.9%			↑	España
France	117	8,193	1.5%				1,028	31,440	5.7%				France
Ireland	109	2,236	3.2%				317	6,140	8.7%			↑	Ireland
Italia	342	13,707	4.6%			↑	2,507	49,364	16.4%				Italia
Luxembourg	13	160	6.2%				38	352	13.6%				Luxembourg
Nederland	79	10,000	24.1%				76	7,078	17.0%				Nederland
Österreich	83	12,080	14.4%				127	9,144	10.9%				Österreich
Portugal	47	8,468	9.2%				94	16,502	17.9%			↑	Portugal
Suomi	451	27,500	8.1%				1,381	47,154	13.9%				Suomi
Sverige	394	24,647	5.5%			↑	2,454	50,908	12.4%				Sverige
United Kingdom	209	8,648	3.5%				386	17,941	7.4%				United Kingdom
EUR 15	2,920	209,792					12,178	384,472					EUR 15

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

- notably insufficient
- incomplete
- largely complete

- incomplete and/or not computerised
- complete and computerised
- complete, computerised and validated
- recent significant progress

- notably insufficient
- substantial list but still incomplete
- complete

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

The Natura Barometer: commentary on progress

- Under the Habitats Directive, significant progress can be reported for the following countries: 701 new sites for Germany (+6,028 km²), 70 for Spain (mainly from the Balears region), 50 for Ireland bringing the area covered by its national list to 8.7% of the territory. Portugal has also transmitted 29 more sites (+4,352 km²) and the UK has submitted a new series of 46 sites (+313 km²). Sweden has transmitted a new revised national list, increasing the total number of sites proposed but with no significant change in terms of area. Finally, new sites transmitted by Belgium several months ago but omitted from the previous update of the Barometer are now included.
- Under the Birds Directive there has been significant progress in Germany (40 new sites), Spain (79 new sites), Italy (74 new sites) and Sweden (90 new sites). A few new sites were also notified for France and the United Kingdom. The totals for Finland and Austria, based on earlier transmissions, have been corrected. The overall surface area of SPAs has increased by 27,703 km².





Bearded vulture. Photo: F. Marquez. **INSET** Photo: Fundación para la Conservación del Quebrantahuesos

Pooling resources to save the bearded vulture

A large silhouette, almost 3 metres wide with slightly pointed wings and a wedge shaped tail, hovers overhead and then disappears silently behind the mountain. For some lucky soul, this was an experience of a life-time: a rare glimpse of the elusive bearded vulture, *Gypaetus barbatus* – one of only four vulture species in Europe.

The species distinguishes itself from other vultures through its peculiar diet, which is essentially made up of the carcass, rather than

the flesh, of dead ungulates. If a bone is too long to swallow whole, the bird will drop it from a great height onto the rocks below in order to create bite-size morsels. Thanks to its powerful digestive juices it is able to use the proteins and mineral salts from the bones for its survival, an essential 'trick' in such a hostile environment. It is also a long living bird (up to 40 years in captivity) which is just as well since it only reaches sexual maturity at the age of 6–7. Then it only produces one chick at a time.

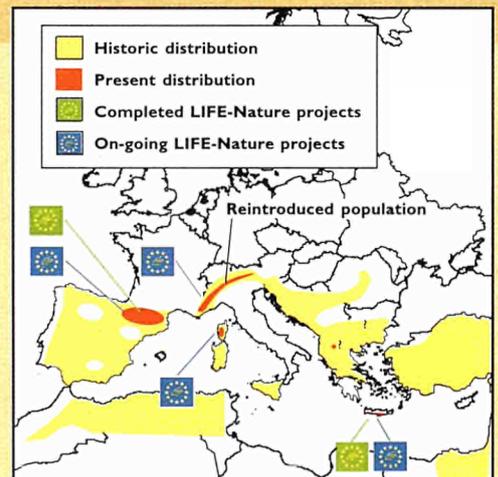
A drastic decline

Up to the 19th century, this species was present over a large part of Europe's mountain ranges but, over time, it suffered badly from different forms of persecution (such as hunting or poisoning) and changes to its habitats. As a result, the bearded vulture has all but disappeared from Europe, the population today barely reaching one hundred pairs. Its last real stronghold is in the Pyrenean mountain range, although some isolated populations do still exist in

STATE OF THE BEARDED VULTURE IN THE EU

Region	Population	Evolution	Threats
Pyrenees	94 pairs (71 in Spain, 23 in France)	↗	Poison, shooting, collision and electrocution, disturbance of nesting sites (forestry, roads, sports activities, hunting).
Corsica	10 pairs	→	Decrease in food sources
Crete	4–6 pairs	↘	Shooting, habitat degradation, opening up of mountain roads.
Alps	4 pairs (reintroduced) (2 in France, 2 in Italy)	↗	Shooting, collision with electricity lines and cable car cables.

Map. Distribution of the bearded vulture in Europe.



Corsica and Crete and, in the Alps, a small number have recently been re-introduced to the wild.

LIFE-Nature steps in

In view of its precarious state *Gypaetus barbatus* is considered a priority species for funding under LIFE. Altogether, six projects have been funded over the years, two are already complete whilst the other four started in tandem in 1998.

International collaboration in the Pyrenees

Part of the Franco-Spanish project for the conservation of threatened vertebrates in the Pyrenees was dedicated to establishing a conservation plan for the bearded vulture across this particular mountain range. By the end of the project, in 1999, the population had increased noticeably and a number of previously abandoned areas, particularly in the eastern part of the chain towards France, had been re-colonised. There is however still a problem to be resolved concerning the classification of these areas as SPAs. Practical experience, gained through this first project was also to serve the new projects well.

Natural re-colonisation in the Spanish Sierras

The Aragon region of Spain harbours the most significant population of the Union. Here numbers have shown a slow but steady increase over the last couple of years, thanks to conservation efforts. The new LIFE-Nature project intends to capitalise on this dynamism and encourage the natural re-population of other chains. Young birds are radio-tracked to identify potential threats to their expansion (too many birds may be dying from poisoning or collisions with power lines). Special feeding stations are also being set up at strategic locations to attract pioneer vultures in the hope that they may settle in the area.

Effects of changing livestock practices in Corsica

Transhumance – moving livestock from the lowlands up to the higher regions – is an age-old tradition in Corsica. It also provides a vital

source of food for the bearded vultures. The steady decline in breeding success over the last fifteen years is most probably due to the gradual abandonment of traditional practices. Thanks to the LIFE project, a concerted effort is being made to study the effects of changing pastoral activities on the species. Dedicated staff has been hired to monitor nesting sites, set up feeding stations and assess the number of herds within the vultures' range.

The return the Bearded Vulture to the Alps

As part of an international programme for the reintroduction of *Gypaetus barbatus* to the alpine range, the LIFE-Nature project on the French side of the Alps is now releasing 2–3 captive-bred birds annually. At the same time, efforts are underway to limit deaths around the nesting sites, for instance, electricity lines will be adjusted to prevent electrocution and collisions. The population remains very fragile though – only last Spring a vulture was shot dead by an unscrupulous hunter.

Saving the last vestiges in Greece

Having come to the sad conclusion that the species is most likely extinct on mainland Greece, efforts are now focused on protecting the last remaining individuals, identified through a previous

project, on the island of Crete. The majority of the actions are focused on combating the two main threats here, poaching and the opening up of mountain roads. The situation remains dire though – despite the project's best efforts, three birds have already died at the hands of poachers in recent years.

Creating a European Network for the Bearded Vulture

Recognising that they were pursuing similar objectives, the four on-going LIFE-Nature projects, together with the previous Franco-Spanish project were persuaded by the European Commission to form a bearded vulture network. The purpose is to encourage exchanges of experience between the different projects and to carry out certain actions in common. Eventually, it should also be possible to decide on the conservation priorities for the species at a European level.

Each project appointed a contact person who is responsible for organising, in turn, a series of technical workshops within each of the regions. The intention is not so much focused on discussing the scientific aspects of the species' conservation but more on encouraging cooperation and synergies between the people working in the different areas. It is also an effective means of avoiding unnecessary duplication and saving money.

Electric powerlines responsible for electrocuting bearded vultures. Photo: F. Marquez



ON SITE continued

Here is a flavour of the type of issues discussed at these workshops:

Exchange of conservation techniques

Many of the problems are best tackled at a local level, but for some actions, such as the establishment of feeding stations, it can be very useful to exchange views on how this should be done in practice. Recent discussions concluded the following general guiding principles: feeding stations are best established in remote areas in the mountains to avoid disturbance from human activities. The food should consist mainly of bones, rather than whole carcasses, to limit competition from other scavengers. It should be delivered on a regular basis, around twice a month between November and April. This period not only corresponds to the early stages of the breeding cycle but also covers the time of year when food shortages are at their most acute. As to the ultimate purpose of such feeding stations it was generally agreed that it should help immature vultures increase their chances of survival and provide regular safe food sources (without poison) to help colonise new areas. But they should only be used as an interim measure until the population recovers.

Cooperation in the field

Members of one team have gone on training programmes in another region to improve their field skills. A new pair of vultures was discovered during precisely such a

Feeding station, high in the Spanish Sierras.
Photo: Fundación para la Conservación del Quebrantahuesos



Information kiosk on the bearded vulture in Chania, Crete.
Photo: Natural History Museum, Crete

training workshop in Corsica in 1999. – so much for on the job training!

Common communication tools

An obvious form of cooperation is on the production of awareness raising material, which can be used in all countries. The Greek project, for instance, produced a poster with the name of the species in several languages and dialects and with the logos of the different organisations involved in its conservation. The Pyrenees project, on the other hand, developed an educational kit composed of 12 different aides – slides, brochures, CD Roms, board games and even a life-size model of the bird. This is now being adapted for use in Corsica and the Alps.

Common training tools

Taking this theme one step further, the Greek, Corsican and Aragon projects are currently working together to produce a common guide on the identification of the different stages of plumage. This should help determine the age of the birds, and the structure of the population. Information sheets will be produced in all three languages. At the last such event scientists from an Austrian non LIFE-related project for the species were so interested in the guide that they also asked to be associated with the work and to help translate the sheets into German and Italian.

The added value of networking

As the above examples illustrate, there can be many advantages to establishing a network between projects which target the same species and deal with similar problems. But finally, at the end of the day, perhaps one of the most important considerations is that it could save time. When dealing with species as endangered as the Bearded Vulture, this element is crucial. Let's hope that more and more LIFE-Nature projects will follow the example in the future.

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New reporting guidelines for LIFE III

Earlier in the year, the Commission provided LIFE II beneficiaries with a series of guidelines on how to report on their projects. These have now been revised to take account of the new Standard Administrative Provisions for LIFE III. Both reports – for projects funded under LIFE II and for those funded under LIFE III – will be available early in the new year in French, English, German, Spanish and Italian on DG Environment's website (address at bottom of page 12).

Natura 2000 and military land

The French Ministry of Defence has published a brochure on defending and protecting nature. This well illustrated document provides, amongst others, an account of the partnerships set up through LIFE-Nature projects. For instance, descriptions are given of the collaboration established between Belgian, French, Luxembourg, and German NGOs and the French army within the framework of the international bats project (see issue 11 of this newsletter). Military areas are often particularly rich in natural habitats and species, most probably due to the almost total absence of chemicals and low maintenance which favours early succession. In France, 17% of the military land, i.e. 45,000 ha, has been proposed for inclusion in the Natura 2000 network. *Contact: Délégation à l'information et à la communication de la Défense, 14 rue Saint-Dominique F- 00450 Armées, Tel: +33 1 44.42.30.11, Fax: 33 1 44 42 31 43, Internet: www.defense.gouv.fr*

European strategy for coastal zones

Between 1996 and 1999, the Directorates General for Environment, Fisheries and Regional Policy have been working together to promote measures to stem the deterioration of Europe's coastal zones. This took the form of a Demonstration Programme on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) which

aimed to provide technical information about sustainable coastal zone management and stimulate a broad debate among the various actors involved.

Following on from that programme and in response to increasing pressure on coastal zones the European Commission has recently adopted two further texts on this subject. The first is a Commission Communication which sets out a European strategy to address the deterioration of conditions in coastal zones. The strategy underlines the need for informed, coordinated and complementary action at all levels of administration and the involvement of all stakeholders who use or manage coastal zones. The second document is a proposal for a Recommendation encouraging Member States to develop their own national strategies for the ICZM. Both texts can be found on the website europa.eu.int/comm/environment/iczm/home.htm

Monasteries in Greece do their bit for nature

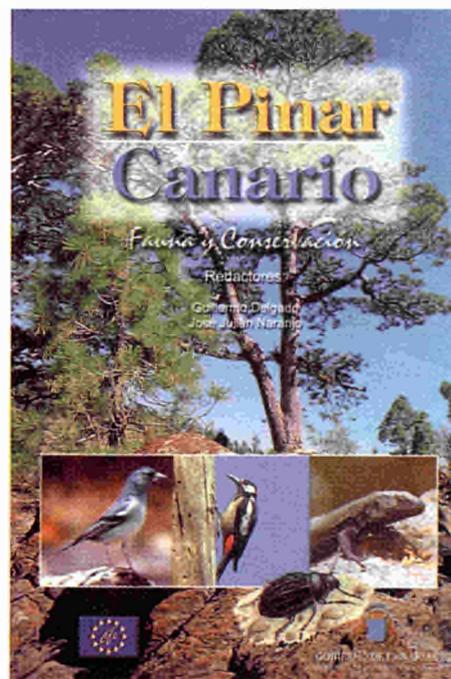
LIFE-Nature puts much emphasis on forging partnerships, sometimes with curious results. In Greece, for instance, Monasteries are cropping up with increasingly regularity in projects. Not so surprising perhaps if one considers that they are amongst the largest land-owners in Greece and that much of this land is extensively, as opposed to intensively, managed. Work started as far back as 1991, under the previous ACE programme, when the monastery of Simonos Petras on Mount Athos (Northern Greece) received co-financing for a project aimed at protecting its forest habitats. This led to a special forest management strategy and innovative techniques for soil protection.

More recently, on the island of Crete, the Monastery of Toplou has been collaborating since 1998 in a project targeting the endemic palm forest at Vai. This small site is hemmed in by agricultural land, which prevents it from regenerating and expanding. However, thanks to the Monastery, there may be a way out of this stranglehold as they have offered to swap some of their own

land elsewhere in the area for the agricultural holdings around the forest. That way the farmers can continue to farm but, at the same time, the forest can start to expand into the newly created buffer zones. Lastly, in the hills surrounding Amvrakikos bay, the Monastery of Prophet Elias has begun planting trees to encourage the return of rare raptors to the area. Efforts are now underway to try to bring this activity into the fold of a LIFE-Nature project aimed at the threatened birds of the area.

Woodpeckers and pine forests in the Canaries

The Canarian pine forests harbour many rare endemics including two sub-species of the Great Spotted Woodpecker, *Dendrocopos major*. Recognising the precarious fate of these habitats and species, the regional government for the Canaries came forward, in 1997, with a LIFE-Nature project for the great spotted woodpecker on the Island of Tenerife. As part of its awareness-raising programme, it recently published a very informative and comprehensive book of both the pine forests and their resident fauna, focusing in particular on threatened species. The main conservation problems (forest fires, over-exploitation of water and inadequate forest structure due to past afforestation patterns) are explained. So are the actions already undertaken through



NEWS ROUND UP continued

LIFE-Nature to promote their conservation. These range from practical hands-on measures, such as forest clear-cutting, to more policy oriented changes, such as amendments to regional forestry policies. *For a copy (in Spanish only) contact: Asunción Delgado Dirección General de Medio Ambiente Gobierno de Canarias, Avda. Anaga, 35, E-38001 Santa Cruz de Tenerife Tel: + 34 922 473900, Fax: +34 922 287115*

Innovative techniques to cut down Juniperus

The Archipelago National Park encompasses 8,400 islands in the Baltic off the south-west tip of Finland. Here nature abounds, each island shelters a rich and varied mosaic of habitat types from wooded pastures to wet and dry meadows. But, with the abandonment of small-scale island farming practices, much of this natural heritage is disappearing under a thick canopy of scrub.

That is why, in 1997, a LIFE-Nature project was launched to remove the invading scrub on 34 islands. To assist in this process, special machinery was developed, thanks to the ingenuity of some project participants. The first was a tractor with an adapted gripping arm to remove *Juniperus communis*, a job that would normally have been done manually. The second – a stump remover – is still at the prototype stage but has already shown itself to be cost effective (850 €/ha) compared to more traditional methods (2500 €/ha). These and other experiences are written up in a book entitled 'Island Pastures' *For a copy (in Finnish, Swedish or*



Adapted tractor, Archipelago National Park, Finland. Photo: Leif Lindgren

English – 295 FIM) contact: Leif Lindgren, FIN-21710 Korppoo, Finland. Tel: +358 2 465 1860 Fax +358 2 465 1861 E-mail: leif.lindgren@metsa.fi.

Protection of Sea turtles in Madeira

The Centre of Investigation and Technology of Madeira is currently running a Life-Nature project to support the conservation of North Atlantic sea turtles. As part of their work they published an easy-to-use identification booklet on sea turtles destined for the local community. The last section describes what to do if you encounter a sea turtle. *For copies (in Portuguese) contact: Estação de Biologia Marinha do Funchal, Promenade da Orla Marítima, Cais do Carvão, 9000-107 Funchal, Madeira, Portugal, dellinger@uma.pt*

LIFE-Nature websites

Continuing with news of the latest project websites:

- Protection of nature on the Federsee, Germany – <http://www.Naturschutz-am-Federsee.de> (in German)
- LIFE project in eastern Germany's Mueritz national park <http://www.nationalpark-mueritz.de/> (in German)

- Restoration of peat bogs near Salzburg, Austria: <http://www.land-sbg.gv.at/naturschutz/wengermoor> (in German)
- Management of *Asphodelus bentorainhae* habitats in Portugal <http://www.gardunha.com/life.htm>
- 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/lifeproject.htm> (in Swedish only)

Apologies: We forgot to credit the photo of the flying squirrel on page three of issue 12 of the newsletter. This was taken by Heikki Willamo.

Naturschutz am Federsee

Herzlich willkommen!

...im Europa-Vogelreservat Federsee, dem größten Moor Südwest-Deutschlands!

Lust am Wasser?

Natur zum Genießen
In dieser einzigartigen Moorlandschaft können Sie über Lehrpfade und Stege die herrliche Natur erkunden und seltene Tiere und Pflanzen beobachten

Rückzugsräume
Der Federsee, umdringene Schilfröhre, unruhige Moorwälder und weitläufige Feuchtwiesen sind wertvolle Lebensräume für 65 Vogelarten, Orchideen und seltene Schmetterlinge

Wei das Federseemoor durch jahrzehntelange Erntewässerung gefährdet ist, arbeiten die NABU und das NABU Federsee seit Jahren Hand in Hand an vielfältigen Schutzmaßnahmen.

Seit 1997 unterstützt auch die EU über ihr Forstprogramm "LIFE-Nature" diese einmalige Landschaft.

NATURA 2000 NEWSLETTER

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