



# natura

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*Drover with his flock passing the castle of Segovia, Castilla León, Spain.*  
Photo: Fundación Global Nature, Eduardo de Miguel

## NATURA 2000 MOVES ONE STEP CLOSER

**On the 22 December 2003, the Commission adopted the Alpine biogeographical list. This adds a further 959 sites (94,460 km<sup>2</sup>) to the Natura 2000 Network. Together, they cover 37% of the Alpine region spanning four mountain ranges – the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Apennines and the Fennoscandian mountains.**

As the Network moves one significant step closer to completion, attention is focusing increasingly on the all-important question of how Natura 2000 will be financed. In this issue, we explore different elements surrounding the current debate on 'funding Natura 2000'.

The 'in focus' article for instance looks at the likely costs of managing the Network and possible sources of funding at the EU level (pages 2–4). Particular attention is paid to the recent Mid-Term Review of the Common Agricultural Policy. The 'on-site' article examines some of the practical experiences of LIFE-Nature projects in using existing agri-environmental measures to secure the

long-term management of Natura 2000 sites (pages 5–7) whilst the final article looks back on ten years of LIFE-Nature (pages 10–12). Such is the success of LIFE-Nature that the Commission has recently proposed to prolong the existing LIFE Regulation for a further two years until 2006.

Also, with the imminent accession of 10 new Member States in May 2004, a special page on 'enlargement' has been introduced (page 13). Collectively they will make a significant contribution to the Network, not least because they still harbour significant expanses of rare habitats that have virtually disappeared in the rest of Europe.

So, with the adoption of the remaining biogeographical regions expected over the coming year, 2004 is set to be a landmark year for Natura 2000.

*A full review of the Alpine list will appear in the next issue. Details can be found on [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/natura\\_biogeographic.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/natura_biogeographic.htm)*

### CONTENTS

**IN FOCUS:**  
**Financing the  
Natura 2000 Network**  
pages 2–4

**ON SITE:**  
**Managing Natura 2000  
through agri-  
environmental schemes**  
pages 5–7

**NATURA BAROMETER:**  
**Latest update  
as of 7 October 2003**  
pages 8–9

**TEN YEARS OF LIFE:**  
**LIFE for Natura 2000**  
pages 10–12

**ENLARGEMENT:**  
**Natura 2000 in an  
enlarged Union**  
page 13

**NEWS ROUND UP:**  
**Latest events and  
publications summarised**  
pages 14–16



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*Iris sibirica* meadow near Übersee, Chiemgau, Germany. Photo: Michael Lohmann  
 INSET Mowing reeds near Bad Buchau, Germany. Photo: Kerstin Wernicke



## Financing the Natura 2000 Network

**As the process of establishing the Natura 2000 Network enters its final stages, attention is increasingly being drawn to the cost of managing the Network. With approximately 18% of the European territory currently in Natura 2000, one can expect the management costs to be significant. But where will the money come from and who should pay?**

These are some of the issues DG Environment is exploring with the help of a working group<sup>1</sup> of experts from Member States, stakeholder groups, non-governmental organisations and the Commission's Directorate Generals for Environment, Agriculture, Regional Policy and Budget. Through this, DG Environment intends to stimulate a political debate on financing Natura 2000 in the lead up to the Commission's new financial planning period starting 2007.

### Estimating the cost

The actual amount of funding required for Natura 2000 will depend on a number of factors, such as the activity in question, the type of

habitat being managed, its conservation state and its socio-economic context. It can involve funding for one-off investment type actions – such as land acquisition or restoration of damaged habitats, or for regular day-to-day activities – such as ongoing management (e.g. grazing) and wardening or monitoring. It can be directly related to on-the-ground activities, or involve broader site administration and awareness raising.

In short, Natura 2000 will have resource implications for a whole cross section of the Community, from public authorities who have the ultimate responsibility to ensure the protection of the Natura 2000 sites, to the local stakeholder groups and NGOs who will be instrumental in contributing to that goal.

This complexity makes estimating the overall cost of managing the Network very difficult. This is not helped by the fact that no detailed assessments have been done yet of the conservation needs of the Natura 2000 sites from which to extrapolate potential costs. Nevertheless, a broad-brush estimate puts the figure

at between 3.7–5.4 billion a year until 2013<sup>2</sup>. The figure is however likely to be conservative as it does not include costs for the 10 new Member States, many of whom are exceptionally rich in biodiversity and are expected to contribute a significant number of sites to the Natura 2000 Network.

### Where will this money come from?

The prime responsibility for maintaining sites in a favourable conservation state lies with the Member States who are, under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, charged with establishing the necessary conservation measures which correspond to the ecological requirements of the habitat types and species present on the sites. It follows that they are also responsible for allocating sufficient financial resources to ensure that these conservation measures can be implemented.

Yet, the financial burden will not be the same for every Member State. Some countries are likely to have a greater cost to bear by virtue of the fact that they have more

biodiversity than others and, consequently, a greater proportion of their territory in Natura 2000.

Article 8 of the Habitats Directive recognises this uneven burden and provides for Community co-financing to sites hosting priority habitats and species. However, if the full implementation of the Natura 2000 Network is to be secured, a broader approach will be needed which goes beyond the scope of Article 8.

### Existing sources of EU funds

At EU level, a range of possibilities already exists for using EU funds to co-finance certain Natura 2000 measures. The ones most frequently used are LIFE-Nature – the only fund dedicated to Natura 2000 – and the Rural Development Regulation under the CAP (see separate articles on these two funds). The Structural Funds have also sometimes been applied successfully to Natura 2000 sites, however their use is limited to mainly Objective 1 countries and regions. Finally, the 6th Research Framework Programme can sometimes contribute through scientific research and monitoring programmes on natural habitats and species.

These existing funding opportunities will continue until 2006. Whilst it is true that the national programmes under the Structural Funds and Rural Development have already been agreed for each Member State, this should not preclude new projects from being funded provided they fit with the general framework, or an amendment has been introduced to the programme. It is therefore in the

## COMMUNITY FUNDS THAT CAN BE USED FOR NATURA 2000

### Common Agricultural Policy – CAP

- **EAGGF:** Through Rural Development, the fund offers support for environmental farming and forestry practices in rural areas, all over the EU territory. Additional incentives are possible for Natura 2000 sites. All Member States provide some support for farmers within Natura 2000 sites, to a greater or lesser extent.

### Structural Funds

- **ERDF:** This offers possibilities for co-financing environment programs, and schemes for nature conservation (e.g. visitor centres ...), training and studies/planning, especially in Objective 1 regions (around 70% of the fund's resources). Objective 2 and 3 regions may partially benefit for limited type of actions like training, promotion of employment opportunities, etc.
- **LEADER+:** This fund allows for the implementation of integrated rural development programs for selected areas. These programs can include management planning as well as promotion measures for the Natura 2000 sites.
- **INTERREG:** This Initiative allows for trans-boundary cooperation between Member States and other non EU countries and has been used for the promotion of enhanced management of trans-boundary sites between Member States and Member States and non-EU countries. It has proved to be an important source of funds although time-limited.

### Other Funds

- **Cohesion Fund:** This fund is available only to four countries, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland and aims to assist these countries making progress in areas like environment and transport. The fund provides support to projects rather than programs. It has also been used to a lesser extent for facilitating some restoration and management projects for Natura 2000 in Ireland.
- **LIFE:** The LIFE instrument includes three parts LIFE-Environment, LIFE-Nature and LIFE-Third countries. Although the resources available for LIFE are limited compared to ERDF and EAGGF, the instrument has been used by all Member States, and a great number of stakeholders. Through time-limited projects, LIFE-Nature has operated on 10% of the Natura 2000 Network so far.

interests of all those involved in the management of Natura 2000 sites to explore these options to their maximum over the next 3 years.

### Looking to the future

Nevertheless, it is now also clear that existing EU funds are largely unsuited to meet the future challenges of implementing Natura 2000. Apart from LIFE-Nature which has a relatively small budget, the other sources of funds all have their own conditions and constraints which are designed to ensure they

deliver against their objectives rather than those of Natura 2000.

It will be important therefore to look beyond the EU's current financial perspectives (2000–2006) and consider how the funding requirements for Natura 2000 can be further integrated into future EU funding mechanisms as of 2007. DG Environment intends to publish a Communication on 'financing Natura 2000' shortly to stimulate this debate.

In the meantime, as this is a shared responsibility with the Member States, it is equally important that the latter carry out their own reflections on the financial resources they intend to make available for managing Natura 2000 sites in their territories. Only then will it be possible to ensure the success of the Network across the EU.

Retrieving individual marbled trout, *Salmo marmoratus*, from a fish farm. Photo: GRAIA Srl



1 Set up in December 2001, the Working Group published its final report in April 2003, available under [http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/final\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/final_report_en.pdf)

2 This is the figure put forward by the above Working Group following a review of existing literature and results of a questionnaire to Member States on their expected funding requirements

## IN FOCUS continued

### REFORM OF THE CAP: RESULTS OF THE MID TERM REVIEW

On 26 June 2003, the EU Agriculture Ministers agreed to a fundamental reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)<sup>1</sup>. This is likely to significantly change the way the EU supports its farming and could therefore have beneficial consequences for Natura 2000. Here are some of the key changes:

#### Single farm payments

The vast majority of the CAP's direct payments will no longer be linked to production. Instead a 'single farm' payment will replace most of the existing premia under the CAP. Farmers will receive 'single farm' payments as of 2005, unless Member States consider they have specific reasons for delay, in which case they have until 2007 to comply with the change over.

The 'single farm' payment system is good news for Natura 2000 since it ought to remove one of the factors driving agricultural intensification. However, there are fears that it could also lead to further land abandonment in areas of low profitability. Recognising this, the reform does allow Member States who fear a risk of abandonment to maintain part of the per hectare payments in the cereal sector or for suckler cows and sheep.

#### Cross-compliance with environmental legislation

The 'single farm' payment will be conditional upon keeping farmland in 'good agricultural and environmental condition' and will be linked to the respect of a number of statutory environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards (i.e. cross-compliance). The provisions of the Habitats and Birds Directives are for the first time explicitly mentioned. Thus, only those farms that respect these legal requirements and maintain their farms in 'good agricultural condition' will receive payments. If cross-compliance is not respected, direct payments will be reduced in proportion to the risk or damage caused.

Again, this could be significant for Natura 2000 sites since Article 6 of the Habitats Directive will have to be respected. However, it will be important to see what the definition of 'good agricultural and environmental condition' will finally be. The role of the farm audits set up to help establish and control cross-compliance at individual farm level will also be central to the success of this measure.

Another consequence of cross-compliance is that Member States are also allowed to make additional payments of a maximum of 10% of the 'single farm' payment, to encourage their farmers to adopt specific types of farming which are important for the environment (e.g. Natura 2000) or for yielding quality products.

#### More money for the Rural Development Programme

The amount of money available for rural development will be significantly increased. This will result from a gradual reduction in direct payments to bigger farms over ten years (known as 'modulation'). Eventually, an additional €1.2 billion a year will be made available for rural development on average.

#### A strengthened Rural Development Policy

The scope of rural development support will be widened to introduce new measures and to strengthen existing ones. These changes will apply as of 2005, but it will be for Member States and regions to decide which measures they wish to take up in their national or regional Rural Development Programmes.

Member States have also been given an opportunity to increase the EU co-financing rates for agri-environmental measures up to 85% for the new Member States and Objective 1 areas of the EU-15, and up to 60% in the rest of the EU (the maximum co-financing rate used to be 75% and 50% respectively). This could help to address the problems of insufficient matching funds from national or regional budgets.

It will also be possible to provide temporary and digressive support to cushion the effects of complying with particularly demanding environmental, hygiene and animal welfare standards imposed by EU legislation. Aid will be payable on a flat rate basis (max €10,000 a year per holding) and will be digressive for a maximum of 5 years.

The most significant change for Natura 2000 is however in the definition, under Article 16 of the Regulation, of Areas faced with Environmental Restrictions (AERs). Now exclusively linked to Natura 2000 areas, Article 16 aims to support farmers to meet the provisions of the Birds and Habitats Directives, for instance in maintaining or adjusting their farming practices to the conservation needs of the Natura 2000 sites. Schemes developed under Article 16 can be further supplemented by agri-environmental measures or ecological forestry incentives under Article 32. The flat rate for AERs in the past was €200/ha per year, but, as a result of the CAP reform, it is now possible to increase the premium to up to €500/ha/year in duly justified cases. This payment will also be digressive starting at €500 and ending at €200, spread over a period of 5 years.

For more details go to [http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/capreform/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/capreform/index_en.htm) available in all official EU languages.

<sup>1</sup> The legal texts were adopted by Council of Agriculture Ministers in September 2003, ref Council Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003 establishing common rules for direct support schemes under the common agricultural policy and establishing certain support schemes for farmers and amending Regulations (EEC) No 2019/93, (EC) No 1452/2001, (EC) No 1453/2001, (EC) No 1454/2001, (EC) 1868/94, (EC) No 1251/1999, (EC) No 1254/1999, (EC) No 1673/2000, (EEC) No 2358/71 and (EC) No 2529/2001. OJ L 270, p. 1-69, 21.10.2003. and Council Regulation (EC) No 1783/2003 amending Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)

Farming steepic areas in Castro Verde, Portugal. Photo: LPN





Shepherd guiding his flock along one of Spain's long distance transhumance roads. Photo: Fundación Global Nature

## Managing Natura 2000 through agri-environmental schemes

**Most Natura 2000 sites require active management to maintain their conservation value, especially in agricultural areas. Funding for this can often be provided by agri-environmental measures under the Rural Development Programme but access is not always straightforward. In this article we examine some of the experiences of LIFE-Nature projects in using agri-environment to manage Natura 2000 sites. They are taken from a new report out this month on LIFE and agri-environment, which aims to encourage other site managers to explore similar opportunities for their Natura 2000 sites.**

### Agri-environmental measures

Agri-environmental measures have been available since 1992. They were introduced as part of a package of accompanying measures within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which were designed to provide alternative solutions to direct payments and to support

farmers who wished to use environmentally friendly farming practices. By 1999, the agri-environmental measures had become an integral part of the Rural Development Policy (RDP)<sup>1</sup> – sometimes also known as the second pillar of the CAP.

Enrolling into an agri-environmental scheme means that the farmer has to go beyond 'good farming practice' in order to provide the environmental benefits foreseen in the scheme. The broad framework and the maximum premia (by crop type) have been set at a European level, but the actual design, contents and conditions for support are decided at national or regional level within the framework of Member States' Rural Development Plans.

Agri-environmental measures are not therefore *a priori* intended to deliver nature conservation objectives but may well help to contribute to that goal, if applied correctly. This can be particularly effective in areas where extensive farming is still practised or at risk of being abandoned. This is important

considering that these areas still account for a significant proportion of Europe's agricultural land and are also where most Natura 2000 sites are located. Here, Natura 2000 and farming can become powerful allies working together to attract financial support from the RDP, as many LIFE-Nature projects have demonstrated.

### Accessing existing agri-environmental schemes

This is precisely what happened on the island of Öland in southern Sweden. Much of the island was extensively grazed for centuries by a mixture of sheep, cattle and horses, which resulted in a complex mosaic of 'alvar' habitats of remarkable botanical diversity. This was also the mainstay economy for thousands of inhabitants on the island. However, in the last 30-40 years, due to low returns from extensive livestock production, many of the small-scale farmers on Öland went out of business. As fewer areas were grazed, the alvar soon began to disappear as well, smothered by invading scrub of significantly less natural value.

## ON SITE continued



Small farmstead in the heart of Stora Alvaret, Öland island, Sweden.  
Photo: Susanne Forslund

This prompted the regional nature conservation authority to propose a LIFE-Nature project to encourage the return of extensive farming on an area known as Stora Alvaret (literally Great Alvar and actually the largest alvar habitat in the world at 26,000 ha, all within Natura 2000). This was achieved by working closely with the farming community. First, the project offered to clear the farmer's land of scrub and erect stocking fences to bring it up to a level where it would qualify for agri-environmental support and then it helped them to apply for these agri-environmental measures, even filling in forms for them. In exchange, the farmers were asked to agree to a grazing regime that was optimal for the alvar.

This partnership turned out to be so attractive that farmers outside protected areas soon began asking the conservation authority for management agreements on their land too in order to gain access to the agri-environmental schemes. The interest was so strong that the beneficiary lobbied for, and succeeded in introducing scrub clearance in the new Swedish Rural Development Plan after 2000. As a result, restoration actions on overgrown alvar also became eligible for agri-environmental funding.

By the end of the LIFE project some 5,500 hectares had entered the agri-environmental scheme and 85% of Stora Alvaret was being grazed again. The farmers were receiving over €2 million a year in payments and new marketing opportunities

were opening up for their products, not least from the greater influx of tourists attracted to the island's unique natural and cultural heritage. This is a classic case of nature working for its inhabitants.

Similar initiatives were launched in a large number of other LIFE projects across Europe to promote the uptake of existing agri-environmental measures to help manage Natura 2000 sites. The same basic formula was used: first raising the profile of the site and initiating dialogue with the local farming community, then helping them to access specific agri-environmental measures best suited to Natura 2000 needs.

### Creating new agri-environmental measures for Natura 2000

In some cases however, existing agri-environmental measures turned out not to be suitable for Natura 2000. Several LIFE projects went one step further and designed their own nature conservation oriented measures, which they demonstrated and tested out with the support of the local farming community, before lobbying the authorities to adopt them on a larger scale.

This is what happened in Castro Verde in southern Portugal. The traditional farming system here is based on non-irrigated extensive cereal production, laid fallow every 2–3

years. The resulting semi-natural mosaic steppe habitat attracts significant populations of endangered bird species, such as the great bustard, *Otis tarda*, and the lesser kestrel, *Falco naumanni*. By the early 1990s, however, the steppic bird populations started to drop dramatically as more and more farmers were forced to abandon their land and move away.

The Portuguese NGO, Liga para a Protecção da Natureza (LPN), set out to stem this exodus with the help of LIFE-Nature funds. It bought a plot of farmland in the heart of Castro Verde to develop and demonstrate ideal farming conditions for steppic birds, based on traditional extensive cereal production practices, and raise the profile of this unique environment. It then took contact with all the farmers in the area to enlist their support for a new agri-environmental scheme that would fund the maintenance of these farming practices over the long-term.

The resulting interest was sufficient to convince the government to adopt a specific agri-environmental scheme, the first of its kind in Portugal, which would be dedicated to the steppes of Castro Verde. Once established, the beneficiary promoted this scheme widely within the region and helped farmers to join. As a result, by 2000, over 75% (35,000 ha) of the Castro Verde Natura 2000 site was being managed with the support of agri-environmental payments and populations of both great bustard and lesser kestrel began increasing again.

In this case, the farmers and the conservationists had a mutual interest in conserving the steppic landscape. But what of those areas where Natura 2000 is seen to be in conflict with farming? Here too, a number of LIFE projects have succeeded in devising special measures under agri-environment to encourage greater acceptance of Natura 2000 amongst the local farming communities.

In Greece for instance, two LIFE projects, run by the NGO Arcturos,

Shepherd with puppy  
supplied by ARCTUROS.  
Photo: ARCTUROS



tackled the long-standing conflict between livestock farmers and large carnivores. Fearing for their livelihood, many farmers are intolerant of wolves and bears in their region and occasionally shoot the animals illegally. This remains the single largest threat to both species in Greece and accounts for the loss of 25% of all wolf deaths every year. The project aimed to get to the root of the problem by analysing past incidents within a number of Natura 2000 sites and holding one-to-one discussions with the farmers concerned.

As a result, the project was able to lobby for a significant improvement in the national compensation schemes for livestock loss. However, all agreed that the most effective solution would be to prevent any damage in the first place. Different measures were tried out with farmers. They included erecting electric fences around crops and beehives, providing alternative sources of food such as wild fruit trees planted in abandoned orchards, and supplying the farmers with indigenous sheepdogs to protect the flocks. All three measures proved to be effective deterrents and very

popular with local farmers. As a result, the Ministry of Agriculture decided to include these measures in the Rural Development Plan for Greece (2000–2006) as of 2003. A drop in wolf and bear deaths in the project areas has already been noticed.

### Room for improvement

Not all projects were as successful though. Several ran into problems when trying to use agri-environmental measures for Natura 2000 sites, especially on intensively farmed land or in areas benefiting from more lucrative subsidies under the first pillar of the CAP. This is what happened in the Poitou Charentes region in France, once home to a substantial population of little bustard, *Tetrax tetrax*. Originally, agriculture included a mixture of arable crops, grasslands and livestock grazing but the latter gradually disappeared in favour of more intensive arable farming. The LIFE-Nature project followed all the same steps described earlier and convinced the Government to introduce a special 'bustard' incentive under its agri-environmental programme. Yet,

despite general interest, the uptake turned out to be very low – only 4% of the total area.

It was not the contents of the measures but the way in which they were administered that put farmers off. These were considered too cumbersome, restrictive and inflexible to be worth the farmers' while. Also the payment levels of a maximum of €450/ha could not compete with intensive production revenues. Many LIFE-Nature projects ran into similar experiences elsewhere. Even in the aforementioned Castro Verde the success of the agri-environmental measure is now jeopardised by competition from higher premium offered for eucalyptus plantations.

These problems were discussed at a one-day workshop in Brussels in October 2002<sup>2</sup>, which brought together over 20 LIFE-Nature projects with experience of designing and using agri-environmental schemes for Natura 2000. Their findings were presented to Commission officials, and helped to contribute to discussions over the mid-term review of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The CAP Reform has since been adopted and has led to some significant adjustments to the Rural Development Programme (see box on page 4). As a result even more opportunities exist to access rural development funds for managing Natura 2000 sites. Now it is up to the Natura 2000 managers to find ways of accessing these resources in partnership with the farming communities concerned. Hopefully the examples presented in this article and the LIFE 'in focus' report will have provided some useful food for thought.

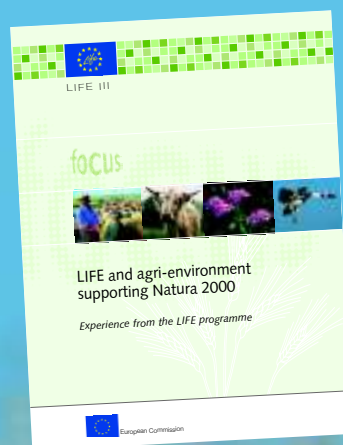
*'LIFE and agri-environment supporting Natura 2000' (in English) can be downloaded from <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/result/publication.htm>. Or a paper copy can be ordered from DG ENV (address on the back page).*

1 Ref Council Regulation (EC) N°1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain Regulations OJL 160, p.80–102.26.6.2003

2 23 October 2002, Brussels



**Male little bustard, *Tetrax tetrax*, during mating parade.** Photo: Louis-Marie Preau, Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux



# NATURA BAROMETER

(as of 7/10/03)

### 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 indications of progress exclude sites for some marine species and habitats, especially with regard to the offshore marine environment. These assessments are therefore subject to a general 'marine reserve' as further work is needed for the successful application of Natura 2000 under both the Birds and Habitats Directives.
- 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							Number of sites proposed
	Number of sites classified	Total classified area (km <sup>2</sup> )	% of national territory	Site Maps	Natura 2000 Forms	Assessment of SPA classification		
<b>België/Belgique</b>	36	4,313	14.1%	✂	✂		27	
<b>Danmark</b>	111	9,601	22.3%				19	
<b>Deutschland</b>	466	28,977	8.1%	✂	✂		3,53	
<b>Ellas</b>	151	13,703	10.4%			↑	23	
<b>España</b>	416	78,252	15.5%			↑	1,27	
<b>France</b>	155	11,749	2.1%			↑	1,20	
<b>Ireland</b>	109	2,236	3.2%	✂			38	
<b>Italia</b>	392	23,403	7.8%	✂	✂	↑	2,33	
<b>Luxembourg</b>	13	160	6.2%				4	
<b>Nederland</b>	79	10,000	24.1%				14	
<b>Österreich</b>	95	12,353	14.7%				16	
<b>Portugal</b>	47	8,671	9.4%				9	
<b>Suomi</b>	452	28,373	8.4%				1,60	
<b>Sverige</b>	436	27,236	6.1%				3,42	
<b>United Kingdom</b>	242	14,704	6.0%				60	
<b>EUR 15</b>	<b>3,200</b>	<b>273,731</b>					<b>15,53</b>	

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

- notably insufficient
- incomplete
- largely complete

- ✂ incomplete and/or r
- complete and comp
- complete, compute
- ↑ recent significant p



Assessment of SPA implementation	Habitats Directive						Member State
	Number of sites proposed	Total proposed area (km <sup>2</sup> )	% of national territory	Site maps	Natura 2000 forms	Assessment of national list	
	271	3,184	10.4%				<b>België/Belgique</b>
	194	10,259	23.8%				<b>Danmark</b>
	3,536	32,151	9.0%				<b>Deutschland</b>
	239	27,641	20.9%				<b>Ellas</b>
	1,276	118,496	23.5%				<b>España</b>
	1,202	41,300	7.5%				<b>France</b>
	381	10,000	14.2%				<b>Ireland</b>
	2,330	44,237	14.7%				<b>Italia</b>
	47	383	14.9%				<b>Luxembourg</b>
	141	7,505	18.1%				<b>Nederland</b>
	160	8,896	10.6%				<b>Österreich</b>
	94	16,500	17.9%				<b>Portugal</b>
	1,665	47,932	14.2%				<b>Suomi</b>
	3,420	60,372	13.4%				<b>Sverige</b>
	601	24,721	10.1%				<b>United Kingdom</b>
	<b>15,557</b>	<b>453,577</b>					<b>EUR 15</b>

incomplete and/or not computerised

complete and computerised

complete, computerised and validated

recent significant progress



notably insufficient



substantial list but still incomplete



complete

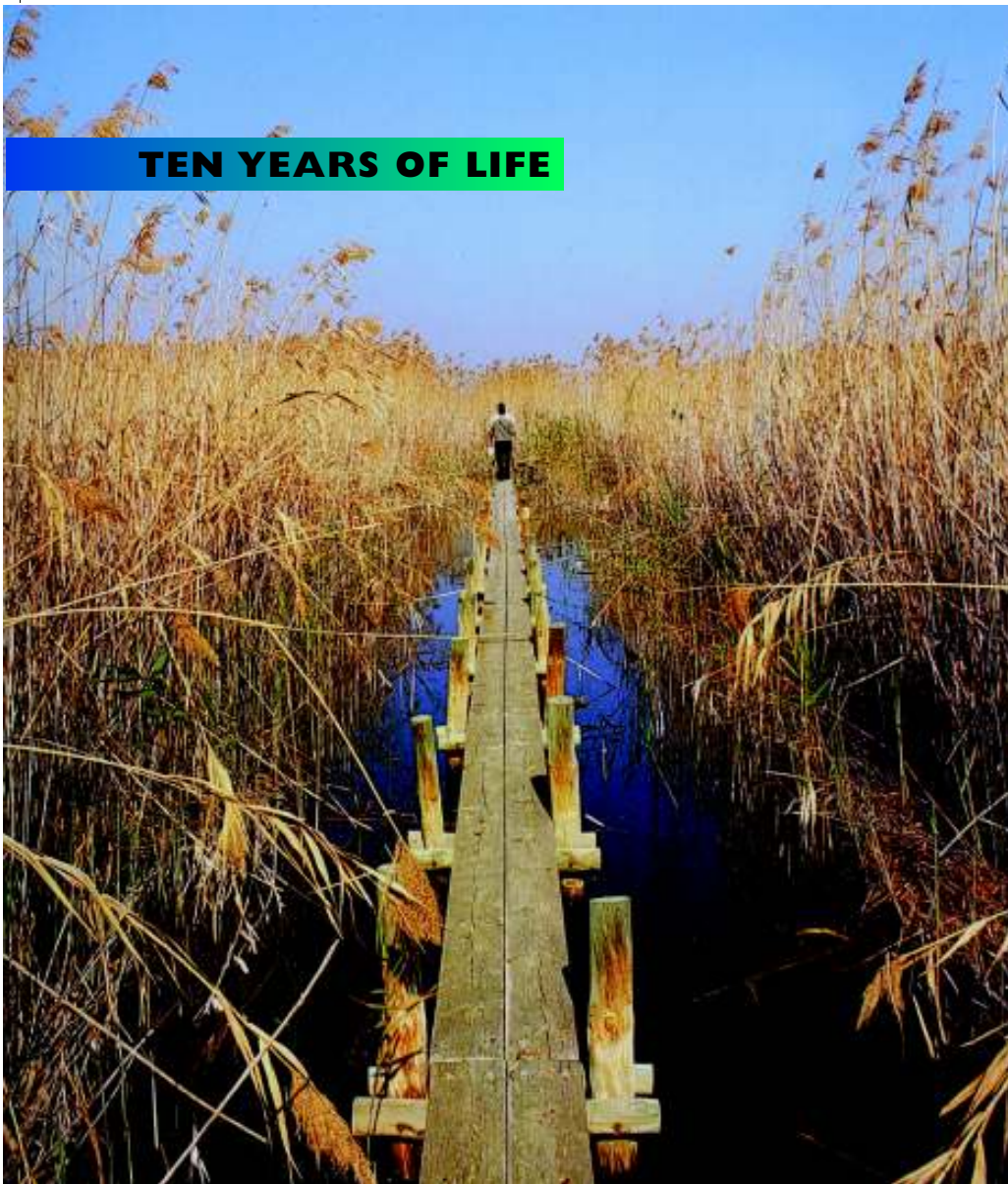
For further information contact:  
Micheal O'Briain,  
DG ENV.B.2  
for proposed SCIs.



### The Natura Barometer: commentary on progress

- As regards the Birds Directive there has been significant progress since the last issue for Greece (41 new sites), Spain (32 new sites), France (38 new sites) and Italy (34 new sites). Germany and the United Kingdom have also designated some additional sites. This has resulted in an increase of 37.912 km<sup>2</sup> in the surface area of the SPA network. There are still significant information gaps for SPAs, especially for Germany.
- Under the Habitats Directive the most significant addition has been by the Netherlands (65 new sites) whose national list is now considered to be largely complete (with general marine reserve that applies to all maritime countries). Significant progress has been made also by France (28 new sites), Ireland (17 new sites), Luxembourg (9 new sites) and the United Kingdom (25 new sites). Further additions are expected as a result of a follow-up to the latest biogeographical seminars for the Atlantic, Continental, Mediterranean and Boreal Regions.

## TEN YEARS OF LIFE



Boardwalk leading to a bird observation tower in the El Hondo de Elche NP, Spain.  
Photo: Ignacio Torres

## LIFE for Natura 2000

**For the past ten years, LIFE-Nature has been the only Community financial instrument to focus first and foremost on the conservation of sites within the Natura 2000 Network. It has so far contributed some €558 million to over 680 nature projects across the EU and, more recently, in candidate countries. Although a relatively small fund in European terms, its contribution in helping to establish and manage the Natura 2000 Network has been considerable.**

These are some of the findings of a new report published by the European Commission<sup>1</sup> on ten years of 'LIFE-Nature for Natura 2000'. Working from the database of LIFE projects, the report summarises the outcome of a detailed analysis

which was undertaken of the type of projects funded and of their impact on the Natura 2000 Network.

Adopted at the same time as the Habitats Directive, LIFE-Nature was specifically designed to help co-finance the conservation of habitat types and species listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives, particularly within the Natura 2000 Network. The intention was not to pay for the management of the Network wholesale (this would require significantly more money) but rather to help set it up, gather experience on managing Natura 2000 sites and gain acceptance vis-à-vis interest groups and the general public.

Over the past ten years, at least 1,770 sites were targeted by LIFE-Nature projects representing approximately 10% of the total

European Network so far. Not only has this led to an improvement of the conservation state of these sites, but it has also generated a wealth of experience on management practices, stakeholder involvement and administrative issues relating to the Network which can be useful for others working with Natura 2000 sites elsewhere in Europe.

### National inventories for Natura 2000

One of the first contributions LIFE-Nature made was in helping Member States select sites for the Natura 2000 Network, by the deadline set in the Habitats Directive of June 1994. Whilst some countries already had quite detailed information on their natural values, for others gathering the required information on a national scale within the timescale set was going to be a major challenge.

Priority was therefore given during LIFE I to inventory type projects. Altogether, five countries (Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal) requested funds from LIFE for their national inventories (several regions also obtained LIFE support e.g. in the Azores or Corsica). The scale of the work undertaken was unprecedented. In Spain, for instance, field investigations were conducted over the whole of the territory to identify the location of 124 habitat types. This work involved some 30 institutions and 200 scientists across 8 regions. It led also to further surveys on particular groups of lesser known species and the preparation of a comprehensive GIS database of Natura 2000 sites.

Similar LIFE funded initiatives are now underway or have just finished in some of the candidate countries. In Latvia, for instance, the whole coastline is being mapped in order to identify possible Natura 2000 sites for the 23 habitat types present here. In Cyprus, a LIFE 'Third Countries' project funded the inventory work for their national list of Natura 2000 sites.

### Preparing management plans for Natura 2000 sites

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive requires Member States to establish the necessary conservation measures

involving, if need be, appropriate management plans. Experience under LIFE has shown that management plans are an invaluable tool for the long-term conservation of Natura 2000 sites, be they large or small. They not only bring together all the relevant information on the site in question regarding its objectives, threats, uses, ecological interests, etc... but also provide a means of engaging the local stakeholder groups in discussions over possible management options for conserving the site over the long-term. This last aspect is what sets Natura 2000 sites apart from the more classic strictly protected nature reserves. Considering that Natura 2000 covers some 14% of the European territory, their conservation must be done in full consideration of the socio-economic interests of the area.

It should come as no surprise therefore to find that over 60% of LIFE-Nature projects developed management plans for their sites, usually in close collaboration with the stakeholders concerned. This will have put the sites in good stead as regards their long-term management, especially as the implementation of these plans was often initiated with LIFE funding. Some projects, however, went one step further and developed generic management plan formats for all

**Rhododendron clearance in an Atlantic oakwood Natura 2000 site, Scotland.**  
Photo: Tim Clifford



Natura 2000 sites in a particular country. In Italy, for example, a LIFE-Nature project was launched to develop a standard methodology for elaborating management plans on all Italian Natura 2000 and to train site managers in its use. The methodology was later enshrined in a Ministerial Decree on Natura 2000 management plans.

A similar approach was adopted in France, at a time when the French Government had frozen the implementation of Natura 2000. Thanks to the work of the LIFE-Nature project on developing guiding principles for management plans, the debate on Natura 2000 could be re-launched and dialogue re-established with the different stakeholder groups. The guidelines envisaged the use of an independent facilitator to develop the management plans and to discuss these with local steering groups set up specifically to involve local stakeholders and landowners in the decision making process. These steering groups have since become the focal point for developing legally binding Natura 2000 contracts with stakeholders. These contracts are now being funded largely through the French Rural Development Programme.

### Developing best practice experience

Whilst 60% of the LIFE-Nature projects were involved in the development of management plans, all of them undertook practical on-site conservation actions to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of the site and its qualifying interests. A wide range of different methods and techniques were trialed out and used on the Natura 2000 sites across the EU, from the most experimental to the more classic.

Some involved initial one-off investments to restore the site to a level where the long-term management is less onerous and costly (clearing scrub, re-meandering a river, removing exotics, purchasing land...). Others helped to kick start or re-orient the management of the site to meet the needs of Natura 2000 (e.g. test runs to check whether a particular



**Natura 2000 survey work was an important component of early LIFE projects.**  
Photo: Stefanie Zeeb, ILN Singen

technique is effective, demonstration plots to encourage wider application across the site,...). Yet others focused instead on species' needs, providing, for instance, supplementary feeding stations and breeding sites, compensation schemes for damage caused or even captive breeding programmes for re-introduction into the wild.

Whatever the methods finally used, LIFE-Nature was instrumental in bringing about sustainable long-term solutions for the management of virtually all the sites targeted (for examples – see the article on LIFE and agri-environment). They also improved the level of knowledge on different species and habitats' conservation needs, and so had an impact well beyond the remit of the sites themselves.

This is especially true of projects that adopted a more strategic approach to solving certain conservation problems across a whole suite of sites. Not only does this allow for a useful exchange of experiences between different sites within a same project, but it also often results in the production of good practice guides or dedicated webpages on the management of particular habitats or species which can be used by other site managers elsewhere in the country or in Europe.

A typical example of such a project is the UK Marine SACs project. Recognising that very little was known about Natura 2000 in the marine environment, this project set out to complete the gaps in our understanding of the conservation requirements of the listed marine habitats and species and of their

## TEN YEARS OF LIFE continued

interactions with different commercial or recreational activities and interests. In addition, it developed model Natura 2000 management plans for 14 marine sites across the UK in close cooperation with all key interest groups (port authorities, fishermen, recreational groups, local and regional authorities, NGOs...).

By the end of the project, there existed, for the first time in Europe, a detailed centralised source of information on Natura 2000 marine habitats and species. The project also produced good practice guidance on ways to avoid or mitigate against impacts, develop sustainable partnerships and establish integrated marine management and monitoring schemes. The results were posted on a dedicated website<sup>2</sup> and presented at an international conference on marine Natura 2000 site management. The results are now also being used to advance the work of the Commission's own Marine Working Group (see news round up).

### Coordinating actions for endangered species across the EU

As for the threatened species listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives, the impact of LIFE is more difficult to assess since many will have benefited automatically from habitat conservation actions within the

Natura 2000 sites. What is clear though is that, collectively, these projects have targeted a significant proportion of the EU population of an important number of species listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives. This includes some of the most threatened species in Europe: brown bear, wolf, monk seal, sea turtle, Arctic fox, European mink, Bonelli's eagle, black vulture, bittern and corncrake.

All are species with complex and sometimes controversial conservation requirements that would benefit greatly from concerted action. The LIFE projects have achieved just that, either through formal or informal networks, and so have also helped to develop (in case of large carnivores) or implement (in case of globally threatened bird species) specific European action plans for these species.

For some species the achievements are more modest but nevertheless still significant on a national scale. In Denmark, for instance, the conservation of 95% of the national population of the fire-bellied toad, *Bombina orientalis*, was improved thanks to a single LIFE project. Similar approaches were taken in Sweden for the hermit beetle, *Osmoderma eremita*, through concerted action on 45 sites and in Portugal or Canaries for the conservation of the rare endemics such as the Samaruc fish, *Valencia hispanica* or laurel pigeons of the Canaries, *Columba bollii* and *junoniae*.

### Opening a window onto Natura 2000

In conclusion, LIFE-Nature has not only increased the level of knowledge and experience in managing the habitat types and species listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives but also helped to improve their conservation status. In doing so it has contributed significantly to the establishment of the Natura 2000 Network both in the EU, and more recently in the new Member States.

One of the keys to its success is its ability to go to the heart of the issue and operate at the level of the individual sites themselves. This has helped to raise the profile of Natura 2000 where it is most needed and so engage the local stakeholders and communities in finding sustainable solutions for their management specifically adapted to local circumstances.

In short they provide 'real life' examples of what Natura 2000 actually means in practice which is vital in gaining acceptance and support for the whole Network.

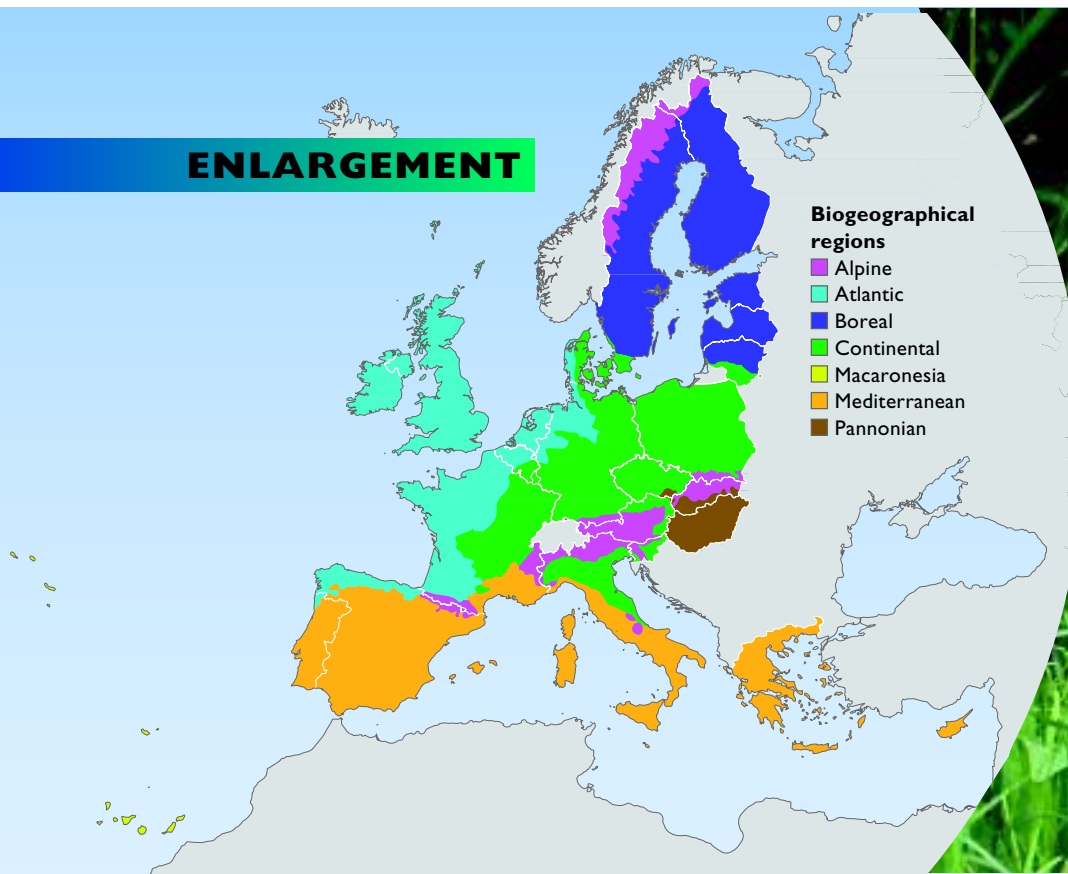
*The Commission has recently made a proposal to prolong the third phase of LIFE for a further 2 years – see news round up.*

- 1 "LIFE for Natura 2000" (in French and English) can be downloaded from <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/result/publication.htm>. Or a paper copy can be ordered from DG ENV (address on the back page).
- 2 [www.ukmarinesac.org.uk](http://www.ukmarinesac.org.uk)

**Improving nesting conditions for lesser kestrel, *Falco naumanni*, in Castro Verde, Portugal.**  
Photos: LEFT LPN; RIGHT Nuno Lecoq



## ENLARGEMENT



**Biogeographical regions**

- Alpine
- Atlantic
- Boreal
- Continental
- Macaronesia
- Mediterranean
- Pannonian



**Common souslik, *Spermophilus citellus*, Hungary, cousin to the spotted souslik, *Spermophilus suslicus*, which is now in the Habitats Directive.** Photo: Micheal O'Briain

## Natura 2000 in an enlarged Union

**On 1 May 2004, ten new Member States are set to join the European Union<sup>1</sup>. Their immense natural wealth and diversity will make a significant contribution to the EU's biodiversity objectives and to the Natura 2000 Network in particular.**

Collectively, they will increase the EU land area by about one quarter and bring with them species and habitat types that are entirely new to the EU. Also, because several countries still harbour important populations of wildlife and expanses of rare habitats that have virtually disappeared in the rest of Europe, their inclusion should considerably enhance overall conservation efforts for these species and habitats.

In order to adapt to this new situation a number of changes have been made to the Annexes of the Habitats and Birds Directives. First, a seventh biogeographical region has been introduced – the Pannonian region – which covers all of Hungary, a significant part of Slovakia and a small part of the Czech Republic. Secondly, new species and habitat types, which are characteristic of these countries, have been added to Annex I (13

species) of the Birds Directive and Annexes II (76 animals, 89 plants and 20 habitat types), IV (68 animals, 88 plants) and V (7)<sup>2</sup> of the Habitats Directive. Amongst these are some high profile species like the European bison, *Bison bonasus*, or the steppe polecat, *Mustela eversmannii*, as well as a significant number of rare and endemic plants and butterflies.

The final decision about which species and habitats to include was made during a series of meetings between 2001–2003 involving the Candidate Countries, the existing Member States, the Commission and the European Topic Centre for Nature Protection and Biodiversity. The final result now forms part of the environment chapter of the Treaty of Accession to the European Union which was signed in Athens on 16 April 2003<sup>3</sup>.

The ten new Member States have until 1 May 2004 to transpose all of the legal requirements of the two Directives into national law, designate SPAs under the Birds Directive and propose a complete national list of proposed Sites of Community Importance under the Habitats Directive. This may seem like a tight deadline but the process



**Habitat type 1520 Pannonic salt steppes and marshes.** Photo: Szilvia Göri

of approximation with EU laws has been on-going for a number of years already.

Regular updates on progress can be found on DG Environment's nature website, which now has a special page on EU enlargement. Here, relevant documents can be downloaded, including the new consolidated Annexes of the two Directives and the revised interpretation manual.

- 1 Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus
- 2 Only one species is completely new in this Annex. Others (e.g. wolf, lynx) concern geographically restricted populations of certain species listed in Annex II and IV which are considered to be less threatened in certain new Member States and therefore not in need of strict (site) protection
- 3 [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/negotiations/treaty\\_of\\_accession\\_2003/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/negotiations/treaty_of_accession_2003/index.htm)

## NEWS ROUND UP

### Commission proposes to prolong LIFE III

The Commission has proposed that LIFE III be prolonged for a further 2 years to bridge the gap until the review of the Commission financial budget in 2007. The new proposal introduces few changes to the way in which LIFE-Nature operates. The proposal is now in the hands of the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. Once it is adopted it will be possible to determine when the next application round for LIFE will be. For details go to <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/home.htm>

### First monitoring report on the Habitats Directive

The Commission has produced its first composite report on the implementation of the Habitats Directive from 1994–2000. This is based on the official national reports submitted by each of the Member State authorities. As it is too early to assess progress in achieving favourable conservation status for the habitat types and species listed in the Directive, the report examines instead the experiences, notably the successes and problems encountered, during the first years of the Directive's implementation (e.g. inventory work, public consultation and reactions, site management, case law...) both at European and Member State level. It concludes with a series of recommendations for strengthening the reporting and implementation process further. The composite report is on DG Environment's Nature website.

### The Marine Expert Working Group

A Marine Expert Working Group was set up earlier this year under the auspices of the Habitats Committee to address the difficulties of implementing the 'Habitats' and 'Birds' Directives in the marine environment. At their first meeting in March 2003, the 13 Member State representatives and 3 NGOs involved decided that, in order to progress with the

elaboration of practical guidelines on how to apply the Directives in the marine zone, three further sub working groups should be set up.

The 1st sub group will identify habitats and species for which offshore marine Natura 2000 sites should be considered and propose definitions of existing marine habitats in Annex I, including, where necessary, changes to the Interpretation Manual. The 2nd group will examine the best means of locating and assessing these habitat types and species and propose a site selection rationale. The final group will consider the management measures needed for adequate site protection and examine alternative/complementary conservation measures which could be applied for 'wide ranging' species.

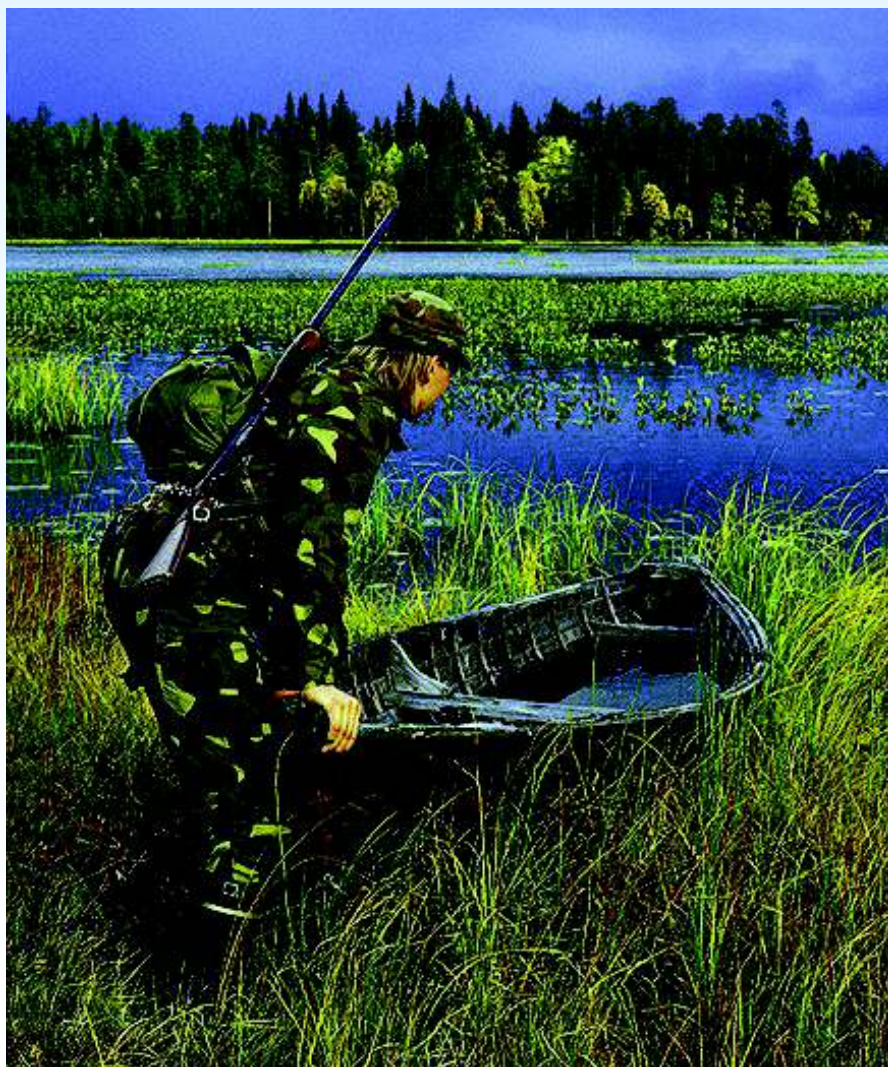
Meanwhile, the Commission has had a generally positive feedback from the different European Institutions and stakeholder groups on its Communication entitled '*towards a strategy to protect and conserve the marine environment*' published in 2002. The Commission will now start work on preparing

the marine strategy, which is to be ready by May 2005. The findings of the Marine Working Group under the Habitats Directive will feed into this process. Ref: *Commission communication COM (2002) 539*.

### A new guide on sustainable hunting

The requirement of the Birds Directive with respect to hunting has been the subject of some controversy for a number of years. In light of this, the Commission has sought to provide clear guidance on how Member States should be reflecting the principles, laid down in Article 7 of the Directive, in their national measures for regulating hunting. The resulting guidance document, now available on the Nature Unit's website, was prepared through a constructive dialogue involving Member States and key stakeholders. It not only deals with legal provisions (including relevant case law) but also covers the scientific and technical dimensions given in the Directive as they relate to the conservation of wild birds. The guide considers the specific conditions related to fixing hunting

*Hunting in northern Finland.* Photo: Jorma Luhta



seasons, as well as issues such as the risk of confusion and of disturbance that might arise in the case of staggered opening and closing dates for hunting. This will be followed shortly by further guidance on the possibility of using derogations under Article 9, now that the Court of Justice in its ruling of 16 October 2003 (Case C-182/02 available on the Court's web site) has confirmed that this is possible when certain specific conditions are met. Available from <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/home.htm>

### Living with the wolf

The region of Castilla León in Spain, which has one of the highest wolf populations in Europe, co-hosted, at the beginning of November, a conference with the European Commission on the conservation and management of the wolf. The aim was to review the status of this species across the Community and accession countries, exchange experiences in managing wolf populations and discuss the principles of a Community strategy for the species, which could be developed under the provisions of the Habitats Directive. Particular attention was given to the idea of developing a management guidance document, incorporating good practices on compensation regimes, avoiding loss of livestock, sustainable hunting and derogations under Article 16.

This conference forms part of the European Commission's new undertaking for large carnivore protection and management. The aim is to develop similar guidelines on the elaboration of management and action plans for all large carnivores within the EU (wolf, lynx, Iberian lynx, bear) in close cooperation with the Council of Europe, Member State authorities, the scientific community and relevant NGOs.

### Green days

Last year's Green day events, held in early June, turned out to be another resounding success. Altogether, 396 events were organised around different nature areas in 20 countries to help raise

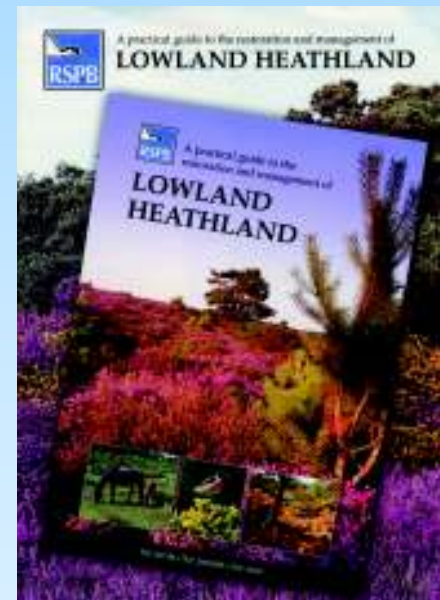
the profile and awareness of Natura 2000. Activities included guided walks, conferences, exhibitions etc.... The most effective and best organised events were selected for a special Eurosite award which the European Commissioner for Environment, Margot Wallstrom, presented to the winners at an awards ceremony in Belgium in early October. First prize went to the Andalusian Department of Environment for its activities with local school children on the Iberian lynx. For full details contact: [e-news@eurosite-nature.org](mailto:e-news@eurosite-nature.org)

### LIFE-Nature projects selected

In September 2003, The Commission agreed to co-finance a further 77 nature projects through the LIFE III programme. Together, these represent a total investment for nature conservation of €133 million, to which the European Union will contribute up to €71 million. The range of Natura 2000 sites, and corresponding habitats and species, remains as varied and diverse as in previous years but more and more emphasis is being placed on creating sustainable partnerships between conservation and other land user groups. Over three quarters of the projects will work in partnership, be it with public authorities, stakeholder groups or with NGOs. *Summaries of the projects can be found on DG Environment's LIFE website.*

### Best practice guides on lowland heath and saline lagoons

Following the completion of two strategic LIFE-Nature projects on lowland heathlands and one on saline lagoons, the RSPB (a UK NGO) has published two practical guides on the restoration and management of these two habitats. Both draw on the best practice experience developed through the LIFE projects and provide valuable practical advice and tips on the management of these two habitat types. They will be of particular interest to other conservation managers across the EU. *The 80 page saline lagoons report, which is free, and the 300 page heathland manual, which costs £19.99*



*(approx €30) + postage can be ordered from Peter Smith; The RSPB, UK Headquarters, the Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.*

### LIFE workshops on the bittern

In the past year, LIFE-Nature beneficiaries have hosted two European workshops to encourage networking between projects on the bittern, *Botaurus stellaris*. These brought together around 60 experts and project managers from 7 Member States to share experiences on the conservation of this elusive species. Now, thanks to a new Co-op measure, submitted by the Land Brandenburg in Germany, it will be possible to continue this cooperation over the coming two years. *A summary of the 1st workshop is available from Estelle Kerbirou, LIFE Bittern national coordinator, LPO, Corderie Royale BP 263, F-17305 Rochefort. Details of the new Co-op projects for 2003 can be found on the LIFE website.*

### Coordinating LIFE activities for the European mink

A similar initiative is underway for the European mink whose EU population has dwindled to a few hundred individuals. Five LIFE projects are currently underway in Spain and Estonia to try to bring the species back from the edge of extinction. One of them organised an international seminar in Northern Spain in November to share experiences on management issues and to coordinate conservation

## NEWS ROUND UP continued

efforts with other range states such as France, Belarus, Romania and Russia. This work will now also continue through a newly approved Co-op project. *Details on the LIFE website.*

### Natura 2000 and the military

The Danish Armed Forces' exercise ranges contain some of the best preserved natural areas in Denmark, including many key Natura 2000 sites. In a new report published jointly by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Environment, the organisations explain how they joined forces to find ways to marry the concerns of nature conservation with the needs of the military. At the heart of this initiative is the development of long-term conservation management plans for all of the Armed Forces' training areas. These will be binding for 15 years but, in contrast to traditional conservation instruments, can be adapted rapidly according to the needs of the Army, for instance in light of a sudden need to train troops before dispatching them on peace-keeping missions. Details of these management plans and how they are structured are given in the report *which is available from the Ministry of Environment, Danish Forest and Nature Agency, Haraldsgade 53, DK-2100 Copenhagen; sns@sns.dk, www.skovognatur.dk*

### Forest fires and Natura 2000

Forest fires swept relentlessly through much of southern Europe last summer threatening lives and property as well as the natural environment. Portugal was

particularly badly affected. By 20 August, around 350,000 ha of forests had gone up in smoke, four times the annual average, of which 77,000 ha was located within 13 Natura 2000 sites. This corresponds to approx 3.5% of the Natura 2000 Network.

The true extent of this devastation is clearly visible when data from the Commission's new European Forest Information System (EFFIS) is superimposed on a GIS map of Portuguese Natura 2000 sites. EFFIS was set up to provide a pan-European approach to evaluating long and short-term forest fire risks, as well as fire damage. Similar GIS maps are being produced for France, Spain and Greece.

In view of the extent of this damage, the Commission is providing additional EU aid to Portugal to help co-finance habitat recovery measures. The cost of fire prevention and control is also

being taken into account in the exercise to estimate the overall cost of managing the Natura 2000 Network.

### Zino's petrel

To finish on a happy note, here is some good news from the Island of Madeira. A new colony of Europe's rarest breeding seabird, the Zino's petrel, *Pterodroma madeira*, has been found thanks to the efforts of an on-going LIFE funded project. This discovery increases the total population by some 30% (to 40 pairs). The colony was perched on a remote ledge some distance away from the other three known colonies. Work is now underway to close part of a tourist trail nearby, remove cattle and place traps for rats and other animals that might predate on the nests. The beneficiary, the Madeira National Park, is also negotiating with landowners to expropriate the whole breeding area.

Zino's petrel, *Pterodroma madeira*, in Madeira. Photo: Madeira National Park



### NATURA 2000 NEWSLETTER

Editors: Kerstin Sundseth (Ecosystems LTD., Brussels) and Nicholas Hanley (DG ENV B2)

The following contributed to this issue: Alexandra Vakrou, Kerstin Sundseth, Isabel Lourenco-de Faria, Micheal O'Briain, Andras Demeter, Joaquim Capitão, Plácido Hernandez Aguilar, Anja Finne, Ana Guimarães.

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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.

For details on LIFE projects go to <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/home.htm>

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