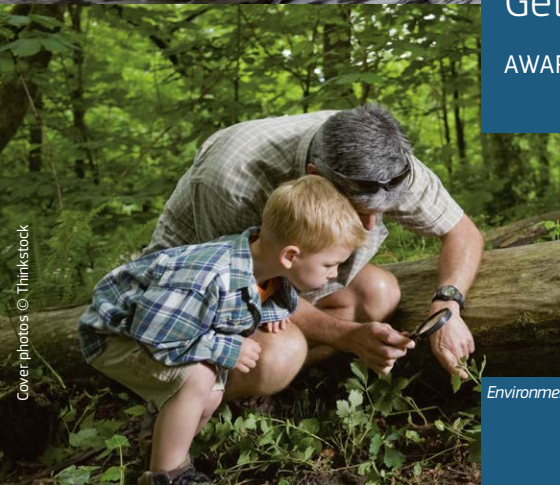




European Natura 2000 Award 2015

Get the recognition you deserve!

AWARD FINALISTS 2015



Environment



European Natura 2000 Award 2015

Get the recognition
you deserve!



Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present the finalists for the 2015 European Natura 2000 Award. The Award is designed to recognise conservation achievements and raise awareness about how individual initiatives are helping protect Europe's unique nature and promote social and economic wellbeing.

We share our planet with an extraordinary diversity of nature. It is the canvas upon which we paint our cultural heritage. It is a source of inspiration, and knowledge and a resource for recreation and tourism. Our jobs, investment opportunities and individual wealth depend on its proper management. Nature is vital for our health and wellbeing.

Natura 2000 is widely recognised as one of the European Union's outstanding achievements. It is the result of a unique cooperation between the 28 EU Member States. Today, the network comprises over 27,000 protected sites on land and sea.

Natura 2000 recognises that people live *within*, and should not be excluded from, natural ecosystems. The network therefore serves essential social and economic functions. Around 4.4 million jobs depend directly on healthy ecosystems in Europe. An ever growing number of these jobs are now based on Natura 2000 sites. The financial benefits that flow from the network are estimated at between €200 and €300 billion per year.

These hard-won environmental and socio-economic benefits for so many citizens, are thanks to the tireless efforts of so many. Site managers, national, regional and local authorities, conservation organisations and volunteers, farmers, foresters, land owners, hunters and fishermen, scientists, teachers, private companies, and many more besides have all played their part.

This year we received 93 applications for recognition by our Award scheme. Each one of these is already a winner. Each one represents a reclaiming of our shared heritage. The applications we received have been narrowed down to the 23 finalists presented in this brochure. This has been no easy task, and selecting the winners of the six Awards from our finalists was especially hard. On behalf of the European Commission, I warmly congratulate these winners along with all the participants and finalists.

In addition to the category prizes, I am particularly pleased to introduce a special prize this year: the new Natura 2000 European Citizens' Award. This is the first Award to be selected directly by public vote. Natura 2000 is based on the idea that we can rediscover our shared heritage. What better way to do so than by recognising these efforts through an open vote?

I hope that the applications presented here will act as an inspiration to all, moving us to increase efforts to halt biodiversity loss. Not only for the sake of our natural heritage, but also to ensure that future generations can enjoy the wonders of European nature celebrated within these pages.

Karmenu Vella
European Commissioner for the Environment,
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karmenu Vella'.

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The European Natura 2000 Award

What is Natura 2000?

Despite its small size, the European Union contains an amazing diversity of wild plants, animals and landscapes, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. Europe's biodiversity, however, is in trouble, with alarming rates of decline in the numbers or condition of many habitats and species across the continent.

Natura 2000 is the key stone of the EU's biodiversity policy. The protected site network includes a wide range of different types of sites. Its aim, founded on two pioneering pieces of EU legislation – the 1979 Birds Directive and the 1992 Habitats Directive – is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species. The network now covers over 27,000 sites – around 18% of the EU's land area and around 4% of its marine environment.

In addition to the environmental and economic benefits provided by the network, it is also clear that Europeans feel strongly about nature conservation: 90% of Europeans are seriously concerned by the decline of natural habitats and the endangering and disappearance of certain animals and plants. Nonetheless, knowledge about the network is still low.

The European Natura 2000 Award



© Adelphi

The European Commission launched the annual European Natura 2000 Award to raise awareness about the Natura 2000 network of protected sites. The aim is to show people what the network is, how it works, and what it does to preserve Europe's biodiversity.

In the second year of the Award, 93 applications were received, demonstrating the high level of interest the Award attracts from those working with Natura 2000. These applications cover a wide range of activities including the conservation of particular threatened species and habitats, ways to engage new stakeholders in conservation, reconciling conflicting interests so that stakeholders can work better together to help achieve the aims of the network, and the provision of socio-economic benefits to local communities.

In addition to prizes for the five Award categories, the European Citizens' Award was introduced for the first time in 2015, thus allowing the public to be directly engaged in the Award process. The Award will be presented to the application most able to inspire a public reaction, judged by an open vote on all the finalist applications from all Award categories.

2015 Natura 2000 Award applications



In 2015...
there were
93 applications from
24 Member States

 **23 finalists
were selected**





Selecting the finalists and winners

The selection process includes several stages. Applications are first assessed to ensure they are eligible for the Award scheme. All eligible applications are then submitted to a rigorous evaluation process carried out by a team of expert evaluators. Based on their recommendations, a short list of finalists is sent to a high level jury to select the winner in each of the five categories. At the same time, the public vote is launched to choose the winner of the European Citizens' Award.

The jury for 2015 is presented below.



Karl Falkenberg

*Director General of DG
Environment, European
Commission*

Karl Falkenberg has significant experience as a negotiator in the European Commission. He started his career in the Commission as a textiles negotiator and has dealt with international fisheries issues, and since 1985, with the GATT. In 1990, he served as foreign policy advisor to EU President Jacques Delors, with particular focus on the German unification process. He was involved in the Uruguay Round negotiations and negotiated the telecommunications and financial services agreements in the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

From 1997 to December 2000, he was in charge of the coordination of all WTO issues. In 2001, he was appointed Director in charge of sectorial trade policies and bilateral trade relations with North America, Japan, the Mediterranean area and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, and in 2002 Director for Free Trade

Agreements, agricultural trade questions and ACP. From 2005 to 2008, he coordinated all bilateral trade policies as Deputy Director General. In January 2009, he took up the position of Director General of the Environment, covering the EU's environmental policy in both its domestic and international dimensions. Karl Falkenberg is a trained economist and journalist.



Giovanni La Via

*Chairman of the Committee
on Environment, Public Health
and Food Safety, European
Parliament*

Giovanni La Via has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2009. He was Rapporteur for the new Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020 and General Rapporteur for the EU budget 2013. He has been Chairman of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) of the European Parliament since July 2014. He has also served as Regional Minister for Agriculture and Forest in Sicily (2006-2009).

Mr La Via also has a strong research background. He is full Professor at the University of Catania. As a delegate of the Rector of the University of Catania, he started and co-ordinated the "European Office" working on the planning and management of European projects between 1994 and 2000. He was responsible for several research projects (Sprint, Ritz, Fair) and he was named as expert evaluator of the 5th RTD Framework Programme. He is additionally the author of many scientific papers and articles published in referred national and international journals.



Hubert de Schorlemer

President of the Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF)

Hubert de Schorlemer is an agricultural engineer from the University of Kiel. He is also a farmer and forest owner in Luxembourg. He is currently President of the Luxembourg (Lëtzebuerger Privatbëscher asbl) and European Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF). The CEPF is the umbrella association of national forest owner organisations in Europe. It works as the representative of family forestry in Europe, by promoting the values of sustainable forest management, private property ownership and the economic viability of the forest holding.

Hubert de Schorlemer's own forests are managed in a sustainable way, and on his farm he has an extensive Angus breeding project for biodiversity with the Ministry of Environment. His farm has a premium meat label in Luxembourg, where the meat is sold in cooperation with a supermarket.



Angelo Caserta

Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia at BirdLife

Angelo Caserta has been the BirdLife Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia since July 2009. He is responsible for overall regional operations and in particular for strengthening the BirdLife Partners in the region, 48 grassroots organisations representing around 2 million citizens. A particular focus of his work is to develop collaborative initiatives to protect biodiversity and birds across the continent.

He represents Birdlife at European institutions and is a member of the Green 10, the group of leading environmental NGOs in Brussels. As part of the BirdLife Management Team he is also in charge of the implementation of the 2020 Global Strategy.

Mr Caserta worked previously at CONCORD, the network of Development NGOs, and with the World Fair Trade Organisation. He brings to this jury 25 years experience in nature protection, development cooperation and education.



Sirpa Hertell

Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Regions Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy

Ms Sirpa Hertell has been a member of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) since 2010. Currently she is Vice-Chair of the CoR Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy and a member of the Commission for Natural Resources. She is also Chair of the Committee of the Sustainable Development of the City of Espoo, Finland. The City of Espoo's development operations are focused on five programmes, one of which is sustainable development. The purpose of the programme is to develop and improve new sustainable solutions for the city in terms of economic, social, climate and energy issues.

Ms Hertell also serves as Chair of the global RCE's Espoo network (UN University's Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development). She is a horticulturist and Secretary General and has a Bachelor of Science.



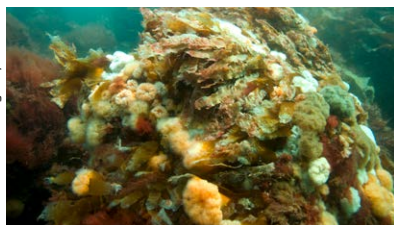
Conservation

This award goes to achievements that have improved the conservation status of a particular natural habitat or species. Target habitats and species are those for which Natura 2000 should be designated – listed in Annex I or II of the Habitats directive or Annex I of the Birds directive or be a regularly occurring migratory bird species.

Blue Reef – Restoration of stone reefs in Kattegat

DENMARK

© Danish Nature Agency



Cavernous boulder reefs are rich with biodiversity, but boulder extraction in the past had seriously damaged the Natura 2000 site, destroying the stable substrate. To re-establish this valuable ecosystem, a large-scale marine restoration projects was carried out. After thorough modelling, the function and structure of 5 ha of offshore reef habitat were restored. As a result, the biomass per square metre

of seabed has increased 6-8 fold, with return of fish and the establishment of a new species of sea anemone. The project has increased awareness about the need to preserve habitat for both a healthy marine environment and potential economic development, and it has established an internationally-approved best practice code.

Natura 2000 site: Læsø Trindel og Tønneberg Banke, DK00VA249

Applicants: Danish Nature Agency (DNA); the Danish Centre for Environment and Energy (DCEE) at Aarhus University; DTU Aqua

① www.naturstyrelsen.dk/naturbeskyttelse/naturprojekter/blue-reef/

✉ nst@nst.dk

The Alde-Ore Estuary – A sustainable future for wildlife

UNITED KINGDOM

© European Commission,
DG Environment



Rare coastal marshland and vegetated shingle habitats are important for breeding and wintering birds such as the marsh harrier, short eared owl, ruff and spoonbill. However, they are particularly prone to the impacts of climate change and management of water levels is crucial. The project created 9 ha of new lagoon and pool habitat, installed new sluices to improve the water

regime, and created new islands. It benefited over 180 species, for example increasing the avocet population to 8 times its former size. It also increased engagement with the local community through consultations, workshops, a working group, education, and the production of various informative materials. Communication activities have included features on national radio and television.

Natura 2000 site: Alde-Ore Estuary, UK9009112

Applicants: National Trust; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

① www.lifealdeore.org

✉ grant.lohoar@nationaltrust.org.uk

Bird protection along transmission grids

HUNGARY

© European Commission, DG Environment



has reduced collisions by 75%. In addition, loss of forest habitat and urbanisation meant that pylons were chosen by other birds such as the saker falcon, the hobby falcon and the common kestrel to nest on. The programme therefore built safe nesting locations: almost 200 hatching boxes and eight monitoring cameras were installed in three Natura 2000 sites. As well as the obvious benefits for the birds, this also reduces costly electricity outages.

A serious cause of mortality for the critically endangered great bustard is collision with high-voltage power lines. The System Operator Company MAVIR, together with local NGOs and national parks, therefore installed 1,900 attention-catching diverters on the power lines, allowing the birds to avoid them. This measure

Natura 2000 site: Felső-kiskunsági szikes puszta és turjánvidék, HUKN10001

Applicant: MAVIR

🌐 www.mavir.hu/web/mavir-en/bird-protection1

✉ davidl@mavir.hu

Nature conservation in Adazi military training area

LATVIA

© State Center for Defence Military Objects and Procurement



in military activities has resulted in vegetation overgrowth. To maintain the complex ecosystem, a series of management activities are being carried out. Since 2010, more than 1,000 ha of overgrown heath habitats have been successfully restored and maintained by cutting bushes, mowing and prescribed burning. The raised bog has also been partly restored by closing ditches and removing vegetation and a mire restoration plan for a further 500 ha has been developed.

Natura 2000 site: Adazi, LV0600800

Applicants: State Centre for Defence Military Objects and Procurement

🌐 www.adazinatura.lv/

✉ laura.jukame@vamoic.gov.lv

Cyprus turtle conservation project

CYPRUS

© Cyprus Wildlife Society



Wildlife Society set up signs, patrols and intense monitoring of 13 km of beach to ensure people stay away from the most sensitive areas during incubation. They also protect the turtles from fox predation using cages. These efforts have increased loggerhead turtle nests from 230 to over 850 and green turtle nests from around 50 to about 300. The Society also provides free training, which has resulted in uptake of their methodologies around the Mediterranean.

Female green and loggerhead turtles return to their place of birth 25-30 years later to lay their eggs. Therefore, it is crucial to provide protection to the nesting beaches. Despite long-term protection, the main nesting beaches in Cyprus had experienced increased degradation due to human use of the dunes. The Cyprus

Natura 2000 site: Chersonisos Akama, CY4000010

Applicant: Cyprus Wildlife Society

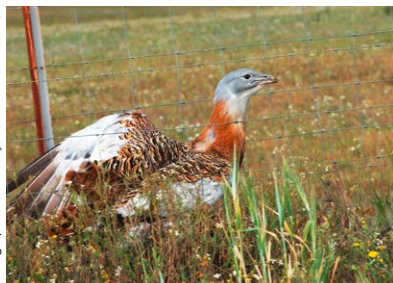
📄 www.aboutcyprus.org.cy/en/turtles-and-conservation-in-cyprus

✉ andrecws@logos.cy.net

Fence and powerline best practices for great bustard conservation

PORTUGAL

© Liga para a Protecção da Natureza (LPN)



The great bustard is one of the world's most endangered species. 85% of Portugal's population is at home in Castro Verde. However, collisions with powerlines and fences were major sources of mortality. LPN installed crossways across fences, which the flightless great bustard chicks successfully use to reach food and water.

LPN also tested three types of anti-collision devices for the power lines and determined the best method for deterring great bustards. Because of these efforts, great bustards in Castro Verde increased from 400 to 1,300 individuals between 1997 and 2012, and the population is now regarded as stable.

Natura 2000 site: Castro Verde, PTZPE0046

Applicants: Liga para a Protecção da Natureza (LPN); EDP Distribuição; Câmara Municipal de Castro Verde; Associação de Agricultores do Campo Branco

📄 <http://www.lifeesteparias.lpn.pt>

✉ rita.alcazar@lpn.pt



Communication

This award recognises successful communication activities aimed at increasing awareness or promoting Natura 2000, which are liable to bring lasting changes in attitudes or behaviour towards the network.

Buboforests – Let's learn how to protect owls

POLAND

© Centrum Edukacji Przyrodniczo



Insufficient knowledge among foresters about Poland's rare owls threatened the species' survival and caused tension between foresters and conservation institutions. The Centre for Nature and Forestry Education initiated the Buboforests project to work with foresters on how to inventory, monitor and protect the *Bubo bubo* owl and six other owl species

found at several Natura 2000 sites. Through this programme, more than 840 foresters and 300 school children participated in training courses. The project's activities have also been included in a series of nature films called 'Saved World'. Additionally, the Centre ran a campaign called 'Owl Counting Week in Forests', which was followed by a nationwide campaign, 'Night Owls', run by the Polish Birds and Owls Protection Association.

Natura 2000 site: Beskid Niski, PLB180002

Applicant: Centrum Edukacji Przyrodniczo (Center for Nature and Forestry Education)

📄 www.cepl.sggw.pl/bubobory/index.htm

✉ sim@cepl.sggw.pl

Protecting biodiversity and promoting best practices in forest areas

POLAND

© Environmental Projects Coordination Centre



Knowledge about biodiversity amongst the Polish public is generally low, meaning that people and politicians are less likely to take action to prevent its decline. The Environmental Projects Coordination Centre therefore produced a series of 11 films, highlighting species such as the European bison and habitats found in the Natura 2000 Network, to raise awareness about

conservation. The 30 minute films feature celebrities as well as conservation experts and are both engaging and informative. Polish television channels broadcast these films to approximately 8 million people in the autumn of 2014 alone. Additionally, the Centre hosted 29 workshops and produced 11 manuals on best practices in conservation, aimed at decision makers and practitioners.

Natura 2000 site: Bieszczady, PLC180001

Applicant: Centrum Koordynacji Projektów Środowiskowych (Environmental Projects Coordination Centre)

📄 www.bestpractice-life.pl

✉ marcin.golebiowski@ckps.lasy.gov.pl

Natura 2000 Day

SPAIN

© SEO/BirdLife Spain; BirdLife Europe



Despite the size of the Natura 2000 network, a majority of Europeans are not aware of its existence. In order to change this, SEO/BirdLife and BirdLife Europe created 'European Natura 2000 Day'. On May 21, the birthday of the Habitats Directive, people and organisations from around the world are asked to make the shape of a butterfly with their

hands to show support for conservation. Participants share a photo of the gesture on the campaign's website or through social networks. Each year, the photos are dedicated to a particular Natura 2000 site - this year the important Spanish coastal wetland Doñana. In 2014, 4,000 photos were generated, which reached over 3 million social media accounts, and 12 celebratory acts took place in four countries.

Natura 2000 site: Europe-wide (principal site: Doñana ES0000024)

Applicants: SEO/BirdLife; BirdLife Europe, Agencia EFE

www.natura2000day.eu

gestion@seo.org

Komm-Natura – Innovative communication for effective action

AUSTRIA

© Dietrich_Komm-Natura



When Natura 2000 was first established in Austria, poor communication with stakeholders hindered the achievement of conservation targets. The Umweltdachverband – an umbrella organisation for 39 environmental NGOs in Austria - therefore launched the project Komm-Natura. Komm-Natura uses a variety of public relations techniques to increase understanding and acceptance of Natura 2000. The focal point

is its website: www.komm-natura.at, which engages farmers, foresters, NGOs, tourist offices and the managers of the protected areas. Other activities include seminars and field visits. In an original and engaging approach, caricaturists draw seminar participants, capturing their expressions and emotions. These illustrations are included in a book, which is also available on the website.

Natura 2000 site: Karwendel, AT3304000

Applicants: Umweltdachverband GmbH; LACON, Ransmayr, Vondruska & Wanninger OG; suske consulting

www.komm-natura.at

mathilde.stallegger@umweltdachverband.at

Natura 2000 – Long live life! Biodiversity meets communities

GERMANY

© Naturfreunde



To increase awareness about Natura 2000 in Germany, where knowledge about the network was limited, Naturfreunde conducted several campaigns between 2010 and 2014. Natura Trails is a network of paths in Natura 2000 sites with information about the sites and their wildlife. 40 nature trails promote Natura 2000

in Baden-Württemberg, a federal state which receives 45 million day hikers annually. The Natura 2000 exhibition Long Live Life, is incorporated into public events and locations such as town halls; it gives an overview of the Natura 2000 network in Europe and Baden-Württemberg. Finally, Natura 2000 Days took place at more than 30 sites, where Naturfreunde organised activities such as hiking tours, bike rides, and canoe tours.

Natura 2000 site: Bodanrück und westlicher Bodensee, DE8220341

Applicant: Naturfreunde

📍 www.naturfreunde-wuerttemberg.de

✉ umwelt@naturfreunde-wuerttemberg.de



© Thinkstock

Socio-economic benefits

This Award recognises socio-economic benefits that have come about as a result of a Natura 2000 site or project. A 'Natura 2000 label', for example, might allow sustainable producers using the natural resources of the site to create a niche market or obtain better prices.

Vultures – Providing gains for nature and communities

FRANCE

© Fédération des Chasseurs de Lozère



Many of the numerous birds for which this site is famous are dependent on open habitats. The vultures (griffon, black, and Egyptian) also need a source of food (carrión). Through management contracts with farmers, the Hunting Federation of Lozère promotes conservation, agro-pastoralism, hunting and tourism in the area by maintaining the grazing and providing a carrion source. The vultures

are now used as a brand to encourage tourism in the area. Between 2010 and 2014, more than 30,000 people a year visited the Vulture House information centre. Last year, over 400 tourists hired a local nature guide to show them the beauty of the region and the magnificent vultures. A “vulture beer” is also produced. This project clearly demonstrates that nature conservation and economic development go hand in hand.

Natura 2000 site: Gorges du Tarn et de la Jonte, FR9110105

Applicant: Fédération des Chasseurs de Lozère

📄 www.gorgestamjonte.n2000.fr

✉ aurore.lhotte@gmail.com

Qnatur – Catalysing the eco-business in Natura 2000

SPAIN

© Qnatur



People perceive protected sites as being of high quality. A protection label can therefore bring visitors to an area. However, most Natura 2000 sites are not signposted for the general public, and it is therefore difficult for people to recognise these sites that provide not only personal inspiration but also eco-entrepreneurs' products and services.

To help promote eco-entrepreneurs who positively impact on Natura 2000 sites, Qnatur has developed an online platform, consisting of a website, blog, newsletter and other social media. The online platform currently promotes 512 eco-entrepreneurs from 39 Natura 2000 sites. The platform highlights the quality of the eco-entrepreneurs' products and services, attracting people to their businesses and thus benefiting the sites.

Natura 2000 site: Arribes del Duero, ES4150096

Applicant: Qnatur

📄 www.qnatur.com

✉ info@qnatur.com



Reconciling interests/perceptions

This Award goes to successful efforts that brought together opposing socio-economic or political forces, or land or resource users in a way that has benefitted Natura 2000.

‘NATURA Mission’ – Enhanced skills for better site management

POLAND

© The Foundation for Support of Ecological Initiatives



Creating Natura 2000 management plans can be complicated because their conservation objectives often impact on local stakeholders, such as landowners, farmers, foresters and NGOs. Involvement of stakeholders in both the preparation and implementation of these plans is crucial. Natura Mission focuses on stakeholder

engagement at 10 Natura 2000 sites, helping the stakeholders to actively participate in the public consultations that occur during the preparation of management plans. In all, 16 one-day training sessions were held for 331 stakeholders. In addition, a TV series called ‘Mission: Nature’ was produced to increase understanding by a wider audience of the role of the Natura 2000 network in the sustainable development of Europe.

Natura 2000 site: Dolina Pisy, PLH200023

Applicant: Fundacja Wspierania Inicjatyw Ekologicznych (The Foundation for Support of Ecological Initiatives)

📄 www.misjanatura.fwie.pl/index.php/en/

✉ k.snigorska@gmail.com

Balancing agricultural management and the Natura 2000 network in Wallonia

BELGIUM

© Natagriwal asbl



16% of the 221,000 hectares covered by the Natura 2000 designation in Wallonia are located on agricultural lands, requiring farming activities such as grazing to maintain biodiversity. However, Natura 2000 requirements and management have caused technical and economic difficulties for farmers. Natagriwal therefore stepped in as a mediator to find

adaptive solutions. Natagriwal advisors guide farmers through a set of potential solutions developed together with the Nature and Forest Department. Efforts have to date focused on 230 farms in species-rich, semi-natural grasslands, which include species like red-backed shrike and corncrake. An estimated 87% of Natagriwal's services have led to solutions to the original problem.

Natura 2000 site: Vallée de la Wimbe, BE35037B0

Applicant: Natagriwal asbl

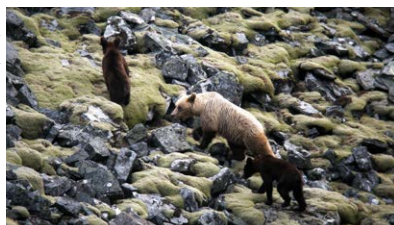
📄 www.natagriwal.be

✉ secretariat@natagriwal.be

Favourable social environments for bear conservation

SPAIN

© Fundación Oso Pardo (FOP)



Human activities have brought the brown bear, a keystone species in the Cantabrian Mountains, close to extinction. In order to reduce human-bear conflict, the Fundación Oso Pardo (FOP) initiated collaboration between stakeholders, in particular with hunters. More than 4,500 hunters signed agreements to reconcile hunting with bear conservation. FOP produced manuals

on how to prevent accidents involving brown bears when hunting. Additionally, FOP Bear Patrols, rangers and hunters worked together to carry out monitoring and prevent poaching. FOP also organised awareness activities for stakeholders, such as cattle breeders. Thanks to the project, local stakeholders have become proud of their bears and the Cantabrian bear population has grown from 70 to over 230 bears.

Natura 2000 site: Fuentes del Narcea Degaña e Ibias, ES1200056

Applicant: Fundación Oso Pardo (FOP)

📄 www.fundacionosopardo.org/

✉ fballes0@gmail.com

Divers and conservationists – A win-win situation

GERMANY

© NABU Gransee e.V.



The relationship between scuba divers and conservationists can be tense: divers see conservationists as obstacles to recreation, while conservationists over-estimate divers' negative impact on biodiversity. In this project conservationists and scuba divers formed an alliance to carry out monitoring starting with Lake Stechlin, which is protected under the Habitats Directive. This is one of more than 5,000 lakes

in Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Most of these lakes have experienced major changes in nutrient composition, altering their flora and fauna. Through training and dialogue, divers assisted conservationists in data collection, easing tension between the groups. Conservationists use this data to detect changes and adapt management measures to improve the lakes' condition.

Natura 2000 site: Stechlin, DE284430

Applicants: NABU Gransee e.V.; Naturparkverwaltung Stechlin Ruppiner Land; Landestauchsportverband Brandenburg; Verband Deutscher Sporttaucher (VDST)

📄 www.nabu-naturschutztauchen.de/

✉ info@nabu-naturschutztauchen.de



Cross-border cooperation and networking

This Award goes to effective partnerships between stakeholders that are aimed at resolving Natura 2000 issues better than if the partners had operated individually. Partnerships can be cross-border between Member States or federal states or networking on a particular theme of importance to Natura 2000.

Peatland Programme – A partnership for action

UNITED KINGDOM

© IUCN UK Peatland Programme



Peatlands are unique ecosystems that provide carbon storage and habitat for threatened species. Over 150 Natura 2000 sites in the UK include peatland habitats but most are in an unfavourable status. The programme has built consensus around the state of the UK's peatlands by uniting policymakers, public and private landowners,

researchers and businesses to increase recognition of the benefits peatlands provide and make information on means to restore them more accessible. It organised large scale conferences, created a website that receives 25,000 views per year, and established a compendium of demonstration restoration projects. A mechanism created under the UK Peatland Code also provides funds for restoration.

Natura 2000 site: Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands, UK0013602

Applicant: IUCN UK Peatland Programme

📍 www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org

✉ clifton.bain@iucn.org.uk

DANUBEPARKS – Bridging Natura 2000 sites along the Danube River Habitat Corridor

TRANSNATIONAL: ROMANIA, MOLDOVA, BULGARIA, SERBIA, CROATIA, HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA, AUSTRIA, GERMANY

© DANUBEPARKS Danube River Network of Protected Areas



The Danube passes through 10 countries (nine of which are involved in this application) and forms a backbone for biodiversity in Southeast Europe. EU legislation such as the Habitats and Birds Directives, and the EU Danube Strategy, now form a common framework for nature protection in the region. However, as nature does not recognise national borders, nature protection needs to work

along the length of the river. Through DANUBEPARKS, managers of Danube Protected Areas - including over 30 Natura 2000 sites - have established transnational task forces, promoting intensive experience exchange, developing transnational strategies and implementing pilot actions. Since 2009, 150 actions have been implemented for Natura 2000, addressing issues such as habitat management and conserving species.

Natura 2000 site: Over 30 sites (principal site: Delta Dunării, ROSCI0065)

Applicant: DANUBEPARKS - Danube River Network of Protected Areas

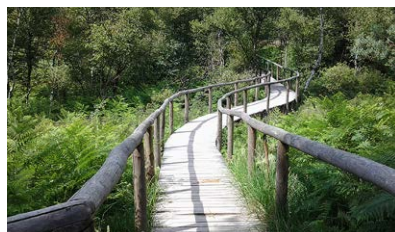
📍 www.danubeparks.org

✉ g.frank@danubeparks.org

Managing parks in German-Dutch border areas

NETHERLANDS AND GERMANY

© Nature Park Maas-Swalm-Nette



The National Park Region Meinweg, on the German-Dutch border, hosts many endangered species, such as bog myrtle, nightjar, adder and the great crested newt. Within the park, over 100 volunteers from Germany and the Netherlands have participated in the project Boundless Nature. The project involved the restoration and

connection of over 60 ha of heathland, and the creation or restoration of over 37 ponds. More than 300 events and 600 activities are organised each year, such as 'Ecotop', which is an event for sharing scientific findings. The project has shown that common cultural history is one of the key factors for successful cross-border cooperation between stakeholders in adjacent Natura 2000 sites.

Natura 2000 site: Meinweg, NL2000008

Applicant: Nature Park Maas-Swalm-Nette

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AdriaWet 2000 – Adriatic Wetlands for Natura 2000

ITALY AND SLOVENIA

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This project involves four partners from Italy and Slovenia who manage wetlands within several Natura 2000 areas. It is the first cross-border collaboration between entities that manage coastal areas in the Northern Adriatic Region. The project uses an integrated management system to help stakeholders recognise that biodiversity is an important factor for sustainable, social, and economic development. Partners establish local cooperation models to engage new actors,

increase employment in Natura 2000 areas, and plan environmental education and cultural activities. The partners have signed a unifying charter, adopted a single financial plan, launched a cross-border monitoring protocol and created a common database for data storage and analysis.

Natura 2000 site: Valle Vecchia- Zumelle- Valli di Bibione, IT3250041

Applicants: Azienda Regionale Veneto Agricoltura; Comune di Staranzano; Društvo za opazovanje in proučevanje ptic Slovenije – DOPPS BirdLife Slovenia; Il Mosaico- Consorzio di cooperative sociali s.c.s.

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Reviving peat grounds in Central Ore Mountains

GERMANY AND CZECH REPUBLIC

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Peatlands are important habitats and provide ecosystem services such as climate regulation. However, in the past, fuel harvesting caused serious damage to them. In 2010, after protection was established through the Habitats Directive, four partners from the Czech Republic and Saxony (Germany) launched a cross-border revitalisation project in the Central Ore Mountains to save the remaining peatlands. After two years of hydrological

and vegetative surveys, they developed a plan to stop the drying out of the peatlands. This included management such as closing ditches; awareness-raising through conferences and a project website; and establishment of joint monitoring activities. The project revitalised 210 ha of peat ground, benefitting various species including the black grouse and black-faced darter.

Natura 2000 site: Erzgebirgskamm bei Satzung, DE5345452

Applicants: Staatsbetrieb Sachsenforst, Forstbezirk Marienberg; Lesy České republiky, s.p. Krajské reditelství Teplice; Zweckverband Naturpark Erzgebirge-Vogtland

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Looking after the Sonian Forest through public awareness and cooperation

BELGIUM

© Yves Adams



Management of the 4,400 ha Sonian Forest, near Brussels, is the responsibility of three regional administrations (the Flemish, Brussels-Capital and Walloon Regions). The forest receives millions of visitors per year and contains several Natura 2000 sites. However, the existence of separate management approaches meant that activities were not well coordinated. In 2008, the three regions established the 'Structural vision for the

Sonian Forest' to strengthen cooperation. This has resulted in, for example, a recreational network and information for visitors about Natura 2000 and forest management. The most innovative aspect of this project is the collaboration between the regional managers, stakeholders (such as citizens), and affiliated agencies (such as municipal authorities).

Natura 2000 site: Sonian Forest, BE1000001

Applicants: Agency of Nature and Forest (ANB); Bruxelles Environnement (IBGE); Département de la Nature et des Forêts (DNF)

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This brochure catalogues the 2015 finalists for the European Natura 2000 Award. The aim of the Award is to widely promote what the network is, how it works, and what it does to preserve Europe's biodiversity. For more information, please visit the European Natura 2000 Award website:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/awards/index_en.htm

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