



# ANNUAL REPORT 2005



Velkolesky Island, Slovakia (Photoarchive BROZ)

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## **The EECONET Action Fund in summary**

In September 1995, The EECONET Action Fund (EAF) was established as a joint venture of the European Union of Site Management Organisations (Eurosita), EUCC - The Coastal Union (EUCC) and the European Nature Heritage Fund (Euronatur). In December, 1999 it was formally registered as a Foundation. The Fund has been supported throughout by the Dutch government, the Dutch Committee of IUCN (NC-IUCN), the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) and occasionally by the Dutch Stichting DOEN, the German government and the WWF.

The objective of the EAF is to undertake and support emergency actions for the conservation of natural sites in Central and Eastern Europe in order to maintain their vital role in the European Ecological Network (EECONET).

The goal of the EAF is to fund third parties (semi-state governmental organisations e.g. National Parks, and non-governmental organisations) to buy or lease important natural sites which contribute to the Pan European Ecological Network (PEEN).

***To date, 158,870 hectares of land  
have been protected in 15 countries  
through 83 projects.***

**If you wish to apply for support to the EAF, please find the application details at [www.eeconet.org](http://www.eeconet.org)**



Photo archive PTOB, Poland

## Project cases

### A New Nature Park Opened in the Oder Delta in Poland

One of the most significant of all EAF's funded work is the realization of the Oder Delta Nature Park, which official opening took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2005. EAF started its programme of action ten years ago, in 1995, and has since supported a number of projects. This support has enabled the acquisition of ca 800 ha of valuable coastal meadows, the implementation of a series of conservation activities and the attraction of new investments and partners. Following the EAF support, activities in the area has been also supported by other Dutch funds and organizations as *Stichting Doen*, *Prins Bernhard Fund*, *Natuurmonumenten*, the *Koninklijke Nederlandse Heider Matschappij*, the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*PIN Matra Programme*), as wells as by the Polish Ministry of Agriculture, the EcoFund, the European Regional Development Fund, GEF, and others.

The total area of the Park was firstly estimated to ca 2000 ha, but as a result of the activities of EUCC-Poland it was increased to ca 4000 ha. The Park covers areas which are extremely important for saving the habitats characteristic for wetlands and brackish waters. It includes the lands owned by EUCC – Poland (currently about 800 ha), the surrounding private lands, forests which are state properties and water areas of Szczecin Lagoon, which are under management of the Maritime office. As a result of the implementation of conservation measures, the wetlands of Oder Delta started to again attract many threatened bird species as Common Crane, Common Redshank, Curlew, Common Snipe, Corn Crake, and Dunlin. Threatened fauna species, e.g . the Sea milkwort, Sea arrowgrass, Marsh orchid, Lesser sea-spurrey, Seaside centuary, etc. are recovering again. Further, the promotional and fundraising activities of EUCC-Poland has lead to increased international importance of Oder Delta: the area has become better known as one of the most important birds' migrating routes. The establishment of Oder Delta Nature Park and nature conservation projects related to it, has as well given a chance to the local community to combine economical development with nature conservation: eco-agriculture and eco-tourism are now under development with the active participation of local people, stakeholders and administration.

With the support of EAF, EUCC-Poland is continuing negotiations for land purchase with aim to further increase the area of the Park.

For more information about Oder Delta Nature Park, see [www.oder-delta.pl](http://www.oder-delta.pl) and [www.coasatguide.to /Nature op 100/Oder Delta/](http://www.coasatguide.to/Nature%20op%20100/Oder%20Delta/).



Oder Delta Nature Park ( Photo archive EUCC-Poland)



Row Peninsula



## Saving of Unique Species Rich Grasslands in the National Park Slovensky Raj.

**Implementing organisation: DAPHNE Institute of Applied Ecology**

### **Project background and objectives.**

The areas of interest: the Kopanec valley in Slovensky Raj National Park, Klastorske luky National Nature Reserve and Abrod National Nature Reserve represent some of the most endangered ecosystems in Slovakia and are extremely important for saving the natural values and biodiversity of Western Carpathians – the Carpathian species rich mountain meadows and the calcareous rich fens. The main area of interest -Kopanec valley, represents a complex of mountainous, grassland habitats and is one of the most valuable mountain ecosystems in Europe. It is included in the Slovakian EECNET programme. Over two thousand butterfly species live in the region which has grassland areas supporting 75 species of vascular plants/m<sup>2</sup> and 106 species /25m<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, these habitats are threatened as a result of abandonment of farming practices and reduced land use which, as a result, has led to increased, large-scale afforestation by the state forest administration. Klastorske Luky NNR and Abrod NNR represent very different habitat – the calcareous rich fens. For the effective restoration of this habitat and securing of its long term conservation was needed not only re-introduction of regular traditional management, but also restoration of the hydrological regime.

The project goal was to purchase and secure protection of the most species-rich grasslands and the most valuable calcareous fen parts, highly threatened due to non-sustainable management practices.

### **Implementation.**

The project started in 2001, a very complicated purchase process took place for ca four years, and it was successfully rounded in the beginning of 2005. The main difficulties came from the fact that the land consolidation process took place at that time in Slovakia. ***Herewith we have to mention that a complicated land purchase process is characteristic for many of our projects in CEE, and it requires a lot of initiative and spirit of enterprise from the implementing local NGOs!***

#### **Purchase in Kopanec area**

The complicated ownership structure in the Kopanec area had resulted in very dismembered structure of land parcels in the land cadaster, which affected also the land purchase procedure of Daphne NGO. For the realization of purchase, Daphne initiated meetings and established close cooperation with representatives of the Land Register Office, the District Office and the Department of Land, Agriculture and Forestry. This co-operation together with the enormous help from the Administration of Slovensky Raj NP made possible successful purchase in the area. Thanks to the close co-operation with the Administration of Slovensky Raj NP were also saved a lot of funds, which otherwise would be used for administrative fees.

#### **Purchase at Klastorske Luky and Abrod areas**

The land acquisition as intervention measure for the conservation of the calcareous rich fens at Klastorske Luky NNR and at Abrod NNR had to meet the needs as for the re-introduction of regular management as well as for the restoration of the hydrological regime. This condition determined the land purchase strategy of Daphne and the priority areas for acquisition at the sites. Again, a complicated purchase process took place: at Klastorske Luky were identified and addressed ca 80 landowners located as at the spring system of the fen as well as at the remaining fen system, and at Abrod were identified and addressed 230 landowners. Daphne NGO succeeded to buy at Abrod **a total area of 2,89 ha** (from 14

Because of the small plots of land available for purchase, Daphne had to identify ca 400 landowners, of which ca 150 were approached. The organisation succeeded to buy in total **14,82 ha of grasslands**, from 22 landowners. But that land owned by Daphne was very patchy. In order to ease the implementation of management measures, Daphne has asked the relevant decision-making body – the Land, Agriculture and Forestry Department of the District office, to designate to the organisation a new homogenous plot of 14,82 ha on the most valuable, natural species-rich grasslands, as a compensatory land utilisation scheme.



Kopanec area, Photoarchive Daphne

landowners) and at Klastorske Luky, a **total area of 2,37 ha** (from 13 landowners), which areas cover the nature reserves' most valuable calcareous fen parts.



Abrod Area, Photoarchive Daphne



#### Main project outcomes:

- Purchase of in total 20 ha of areas of most importance for habitat restoration and conservation.
- Implementation of urgent restoration measures on Kopanec site – cutting of shrubs and trees on 20 ha of grassland, mowing of 5 ha of meadows and removal of biomass.
- Creation of a possibility for restoration measures at Klastorske Luky and Abrod sites, which will be implemented within following projects.
- Increasing the public awareness about nature conservation in NP Slovensky Raj, NP Velka Fatra and Zahorie PLA.
- Increasing the credibility of Daphne NGO among the local people in the three target sites.
- Strengthen collaboration between Daphne NGO and the Administrations of Slovensky Raj NP, Velka Fatra NP and Zahorie PLA.
- Improved cooperation with local, regional and national authorities.

#### Impact and Continuation of Action.

The landownership of Daphne NGO and their activities to insure sustainable management at the target sites substantially contributes to saving examples of two of the most important natural habitats of Slovakia. Important part of the restoration and conservation measures, which follow the EAF project, is financed by two GEF projects: “Central European grasslands: conservation and sustainable use” project and the “ Conservation, restoration and wise use of calcareous fens in the Slovak republic”.

The three sites: Kopanec valley, Klastorske Luky and Abrod are approved by the Slovak Government as pSCI and will be part of the Natura 2000 network. Daphne NGO has been involved from the very beginning in the process of agri-environmental schemes implementation in Slovakia in order to help to design the proper schemes for conservation and maintenance of high nature value grasslands and the protection of wetlands on agricultural land. Important aspects of their work are: achieving of more funding for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management from the Rural Development Programme Funds as well as convincing of local farmers to apply for such a funding.

## Protection of Black grouse within its major refuges in Podlasie, Poland.

**Implementing organisation: Northern Podlasie Society for Bird protection (PTOP)**

### Project background and objectives.

The objective of the project was to preserve breeding habitat of Black grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*) within most important sites of the species in Northern Podlasie region. To achieve this, the project aimed at purchase of important black grouse areas at three key sites in Northern Podlasie and implement habitat management in order to restore or preserve optimal breeding habitat for Black grouse. Black grouse habitat degradation is considered to be one of the major factors causing population decline.



Photoarchive PTOB, Poland

The three sites concerned in the project are: *Rabin?wka*, situated in the middle of *Gr?dek – Micha owo* marshy basin, *Luzany* and *Narew* (Upper Narew river valley). The *Gr?dek – Micha owo* marshy basin covers an area of approx 4700 ha, situated 30 km east from Bialystok. It is one of most important sites in Poland for Black grouse and also for many other scarce birds, like Eagle owl, Black stork, Great snipe, Black-tailed godwit, curlew, roller, short-eared owl and lesser-spotted eagle. The total population size of *T. tetrix* is estimated at 105 individuals (~ 5% of national *T. tetrix* population). This figure is however 33% lower in comparison to the population size from the end of the 1980-s and three fold lower in comparison to the situation in 1970-s. The second project site, *Luzany* is located at the eastern edge of Knyszy Forest (110.000 ha) situated between Bialystok city and the Polish-Byelorussian border. Knyszy forest is refuge for many typical woodland species e.g. the

eagle owl and the grey-headed, white-backed and three-toed woodpeckers, etc. Black grouse used to be widespread here. At the beginning of the 90-ties its population here was estimated at over 200 birds, but since end of the 90-ties the population dramatically decreased and now the population in the area is estimated at 36-38 birds. The only sufficient habitat character remained in the eastern part of the forest complex, where black grouse still finds good environment for its existence: on the edges of the forest and farmland, peat bogs or small river valleys. The third project site, *Narew*, is located in the Upper Narew river valley. The birds which occur here are mainly water birds related to open areas of flood plains in the valley. Within the past decade the number of aquatic birds occurring at extensively used meadows and pastures has substantially decreased. Formerly Black grouse was widespread along the whole Upper Narew valley. Today, the Narew project site holds the only remained Black grouse population within the Upper Narew valley, in the rest of the valley the population is extinct. The population size within the site is estimated at 22-25 individuals.

### Implementation

The project, which started in 2003 was successfully completed in 2005 with the following results:

- A total area of **249,9 ha** has been purchased at two project sites : *Rabin?wka* - 164,3 ha (all with EAF funding) and *Narew* - 85,6 ha (with EAF and VsK e.V funding support)
- Purchase of a land plot with a wooden cottage for setting up PTOP Technical Base in order to assure effective Black grouse habitat conservation within the *Rabin?wka* site in the longer term.
- Altogether within the three project sites, 294 ha of meadows , grasslands and other open areas have been mown, 34 ha of woods and scrub were thinned and 2080 meter of wire deer fences have been removed and replaced with "grouse friendly" timber fences
- The land purchase created possibility for the effective management of Black grouse habitat on the total area of ca 200 ha (The management was financed by EcoFund and PTOP)

### Impact and continuation of action

The continuous decline of Black grouse species at *Rabin?wka* site has recently been stopped due to the long term habitat conservation, implemented by PTOP since 1999. Following the EAF project, with support of EcoFund and co-funding of PTOP, **a new nature reserve has been established within the *Rabin?wka* project site**, covering over 652 ha of key Black grouse habitat, and management prescription have been prepared for the area of 2.150 ha of the key Black grouse habitat within the site. There is also continuing cooperation with local farmers in the works on habitat conservation.

### New project funded in 2005.

In 2005 the EAF funded (via the IUCN SPN Programme) a project of the Ukrainian Society for the Protection of Birds (USPB), aiming to complete the action on wetlands restoration and conservation at Karagol Bay in the Dnester delta in Ukraine. This action started in 2004 when EAF approved a project of the Odessa Socio-Ecological Union (OSEU) for the long term lease of an area of ca 300 ha and implementation of restoration measures at Karagol Bay. The financing of a second project will insure long term lease and conservation of another area of 300 ha. The two organisations will bring their expertise in the implementation and with this joint project will be met the need for the lease of a bigger area and realisation of nature restoration and long term conservation measures at the Bay.

Karagol Bay is situated at the buffer zone of the proposed Dnester Delta National Park and its conservation is of a big importance for the preservation of the ecological system of Dnester wetlands. The Bay has been declared Ichthyologic Reserve (since 1965 ) where all types of fishery are banned the year around. Anyway, in 1993 in the area were illegally built

dams for reservoirs for fish farming. Although the building of the fish farm was at that time stopped, the built dams had blocked the bay. Nowadays some of the dams are ruined, but the remaining ones are still blocking the water flow between the water logged area and the Bay. That disturbs the natural functioning of the Dnester ecosystem: the wetlands perform specific function of biological filter and are important for improving the water quality in the river. That also affects the protection of the Black Sea.

The main goals of the joint project are:

- Long term lease of in total 600 ha as a measure to prevent building of constructions for fisheries and private (vacation) houses and to preserve the landscape and rich biodiversity of Karagol Bay,
- Removal of a part of the dams and restoration of the natural functions of the wetland ecosystem,
- Develop measures for the long term conservation of the area

The amount of grant for the project funded in 2005 is 75.000,- euro. The total amount of the Karagol Bay project is 143.572,- euro



Karagol Bay, Photoarchive OSEU



