



Fot. C. Korikosz



Fot. C. Korikosz

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Fot. J. Wyczyński



Biodiversity in practice

Projects implemented from European funds within the framework of Priority Axis V of Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment „Environmental protection and the promotion of ecological habits” 2007-2013

A summary of experiences

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment (OPI&E), is one of the central, Government operational programmes for the years 2007 – 2013, co-financed from European Union Funds.

The strategic goal of the Programme is improving the investment attractiveness of Poland and its regions through the development of technical infrastructure, simultaneously protecting and improving the state of the environment, health, preservation of cultural identity and developing territorial cohesion.

For the implementation of the Programme almost 28 billion euro has been allocated from the Cohesion Fund and European Regional Development Fund, with the national co-financing amounting to about 9 billion euro.

EU funds available within the Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment have been divided between individual sectors in the following way:

- transport – EUR 19.4 billion
- environment – EUR 4.8 billion
- energy – EUR 1.7 billion
- higher education – EUR 500.0 million
- culture – EUR 490.0 million
- health – EUR 350.0 million

Within the Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment the following 15 priorities have been separated: water and sewage management, waste management and the protection of Earth, resource management and counteracting environmental risks, initiatives aimed at adjusting enterprises to the requirements of environment protection, **environment protection and promotion of ecological habits**, road and air transport network, environment-friendly transport, transport safety and national transport networks, environment-friendly energy infrastructure and energy efficiency, energy security including di-

versification of the energy sources, culture and cultural heritage, health security and improving the efficiency of healthcare system, infrastructure of higher education and technical assistance

PRIORITY AXIS V OF THE OPI&E „ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND THE PROMOTION OF ECOLOGICAL HABITS”

The realisation and financing of activities relating to environmental protection and the promotion of ecological habits is possible within the OPI&E Priority Axis V. For the years 2007-2013 105 million euro was allocated for the implementation of this priority, 89.8 million euro of which are funded by the European Union within the European Regional Development Fund. This constitutes about 0.3% of the total budget allocated to the OPI&E programme.



Fot. ZROT

The **Coordination Centre for Environmental Project** is the institution responsible for the implementation of Priority Axis V „Environmental protection and the promotion of ecological habits”. Projects implemented within this axis are financed from the European Regional Development Fund up to 85% of the total eligible costs of the given project. Moreover, the Polish co-financing may be supplemented by the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management up to 15% of the total eligible costs.

Contrary to the LIFE+ Financial Instrument for the Environment, within Priority Axis V repeatable projects can be supported, implemented with the use of standard methods and instruments.

The goal of Priority Axis V within the OPI&E is to reduce the degradation of the natural environment, halt the biodiversity loss, as well as raise the public ecological awareness. Priority is given to the Natura 2000 areas.

DIVISION INTO ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE OPI&E PRIORITY AXIS V AND THE FINANCING MODEL

Within the implementation of the OPI&E Priority Axis V the following types of activities can be financed:

- active protection of habitats and species, including the support of complex projects relating to the protection of habitats (eco-systems) on protected areas and preserving the species diversity (activity 5.1),
- restoration of ecological corridors to a passable condition (activity 5.2),
- elaboration of protection plans (activity 5.3),
- forming social habits and attitudes favouring environmental protection, including biodiversity preservation (activity 5.4).

The financing model, accepted for the programme, assumes the funds shall be divided between

four thematic activities, according to the following schema:

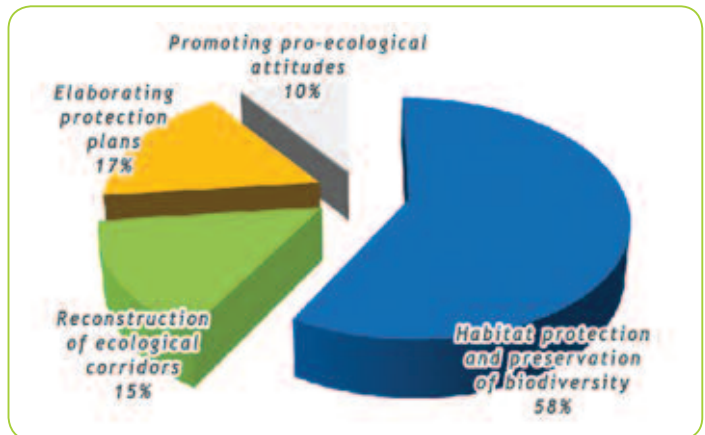


Figure: Financing of various activity types within the framework of OPI&E – % of allocation

The allocation for financing the activities listed above amounts to 360 million PLN.

Is this a lot or not?

This amount corresponds to the value of one or two medium size projects for a water and sewage system in a medium size agglomeration within Priority Axis I of the OPI&E. However, as regards nature protection the amount of 360 million PLN can finance about 150 projects. Moreover, one should emphasise that those 150 projects mean that:

- several dozen species, several hundred stands and several hundred thousand hectares of natural habitats may be covered by active protection,
- several land and water ecological corridors can be made passable,
- over 400 protection plans and programmes may be elaborated,
- several hundred persons may be trained as regards various problems referring to nature and environment protection,
- tens of thousands of persons may be included in information campaigns.



SELECTION CRITERIA AND THE TWO STAGE SYSTEM OF EVALUATING APPLICATIONS

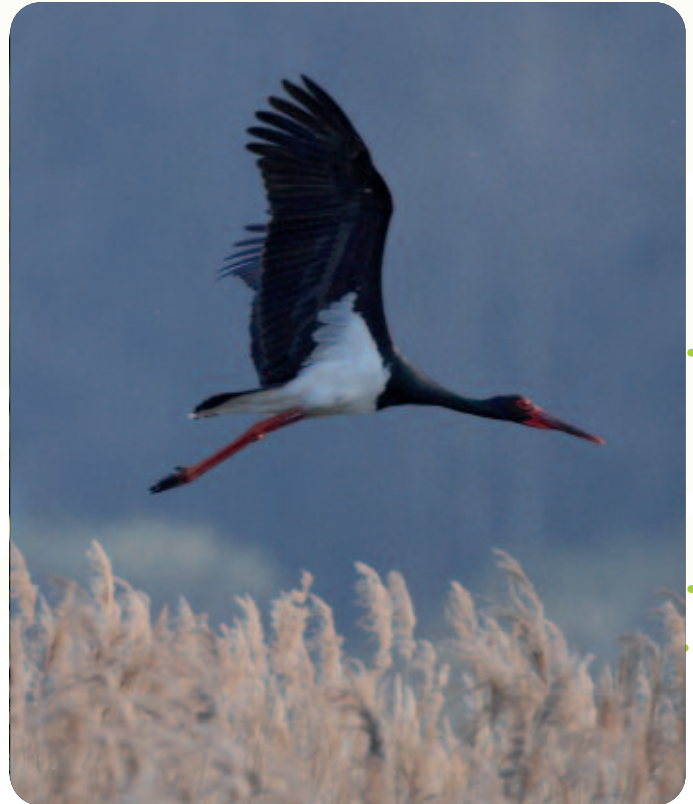
Applications for funding can be submitted by institutions which supervise protected areas, engage in nature protection or awareness-raising activities such as:

- national parks, landscape parks and park complexes,
- NGOs (non-governmental organisations),
- central and regional administration bodies,
- organisational units of the State Forests,
- Voivods (regional State representatives),
- botanical and zoological gardens,
- scientific institutions or research and development units,
- maritime authorities,
- other state and municipal units
- other subjects supervising or managing the preservation of protected areas,
- road and railway management,
- police, customs service, border guard, fire brigade units,
- centres of ecological education and educational institutions.

Within individual activities thematic competitions

were announced, covering selected aspects of nature protection and ecological education, e.g.: „Construction or modernisation of small infrastructure safeguarding protected areas from excessive and uncontrolled tourist pressure”, or „Nationwide or trans-regional educational activities, information and promotion campaigns, mass events as well as ecological competitions and festivals”, or „In-situ protection of species and habitats”.

The competition documents, presented on the website, described the conditions of the call for proposals. And thus, for all activities the minimum project value amounted to 400 thousand PLN, and in the case of passageways for large and medium mammals within activity 5.2, as well as information and promoting campaigns and mass events within the framework of activity 5.4 the minimum value of a project was set at 2 million PLN.



The call for proposals and application assessment procedures were two stage.

During the first stage applicants presented an application for funding, compliant with the competition requirements, together with a Project Implementation Plan, which comprised an equivalent of a feasibility

study and included a simplified time schedule for the project and a limited number of other enclosures, covering principally the Applicant's statements and declarations. During the second stage, Applicants whose projects were placed on the ranking list (recommended for financing) were asked to send a complete project documentation. This type of procedure rendered it possible to eliminate applications, which did not meet the formal conditions and were of a low technical and professional value, simultaneously not exposing Applicants to excessive costs related to the preparation of the full documentation.

As shown by analyses conducted as part of an evaluation of the OPI&E Priority Axis V implementation, a majority of Beneficiaries declared a positive opinion about the technical and professional criteria and two stage procedure of project assessment.

Moreover, in order to ensure independence and objectivism, during the first stage of assessment, each project was evaluated independently by members of the Work Group for Project Assessment, which was composed of members of the CCEP staff, external experts selected in an open call and, in case of projects applying for co-financing from the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, also experts from this institution.

During meetings of the Work Group for Project Assessment the experts could discuss the projects evaluated and formulate recommendations relating to their future implementation, including indication of the direction of possible updating and specification of the project description, time schedule and benchmarks.

One should emphasise, that the implementation system introduced by the Coordination Centre for Environmental Projects is unique in relation to funds from the European Regional Development Fund due to:

1. the possibility of co-financing projects by the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management and the joint assessment of applications for funding and payment requests, which means the Beneficiary is granted project financing in 100% and presents only one,

joint application for funding and next settles the project financially on the basis of the same documentation,

2. a two-stage assessment procedure – a detailed project documentation is required only after the first assessment stage, carried out by, among others, external, independent experts,

3. the fact that the Beneficiary does not need to present a complete documentation when signing the contract (e.g. technical project, building permit, which may be submitted after the grant contract is signed, according to the time schedule submitted),

4. possibility of financing the project activities from an advance payment, reaching up to 95% of eligible costs.



Fot. D. Mroszczak

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS FOR THE OPI&E PRIORITY AXIS V

During the years 2008-2012 the Coordination Centre for Environmental Projects received a total of 447 applications. Within 18 calls for proposals 437 applications for financing were presented. Additionally, from the list of projects recommended for financing by the Ministry of Environment, 10 individual applications were submitted with an overall financing level amounting to 14% of the total allocation.

Bellow is presented the per cent share of individual entities, which applied to the Implementing Agency, i.e. the CCEP, for grants within Priority Axis V of the OPI&E.

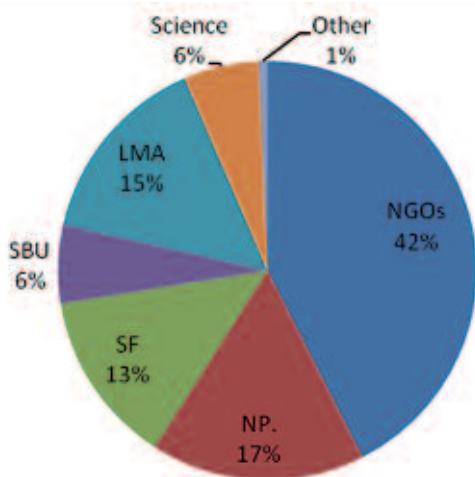
Fot. J. Sochacki



More than half the projects submitted presented activities referring to the protection of habitats and preservation of biodiversity.

Considering the overall amount requested, compared to the allocation available, the greatest popularity was enjoyed by activities referring to ecological education, for which the value of the financing required was almost four times that of the allocation.

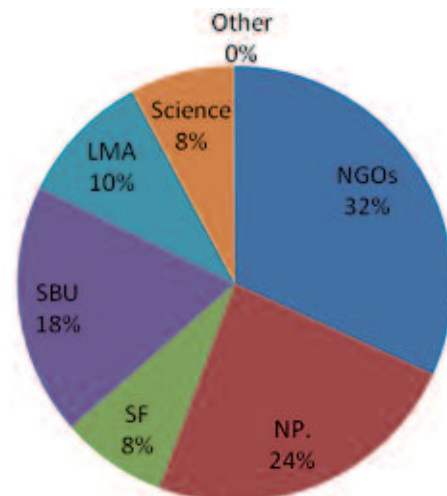
Of the projects (both competition and individual) positively assessed during the first degree evaluation 177 were placed on the ranking lists, what means they were recommended for financing. The total value for those projects amounted to over 400 million PLN. The figure bellow presents the per cent share of funds allocated to individual types of Beneficiaries applying for financing from the ERDF.



Projects submitted to the CCPE in the years 2008-2012 within the OPI&E Priority Axis V

One should emphasise, that among all applications 42% constituted projects submitted by **non-governmental organisations (NGO)**. The second largest group comprises **state budget units** (including **national parks – NP** and **other state budget units – SBU**) – 23% and also organizational units of the **State Forests (SF)** – 13%. **Local municipal administration units (LMA)** and **research and development units** together with **universities (Science)** constitute comparatively small groups among those applying for funds from Priority Axis V – 15% and 6%, respectively.

The applications for financing amounted to a total of 930 million PLN and was almost three times more than the allocation.



Projects recommended for financing after the first stage technical assessment (value)

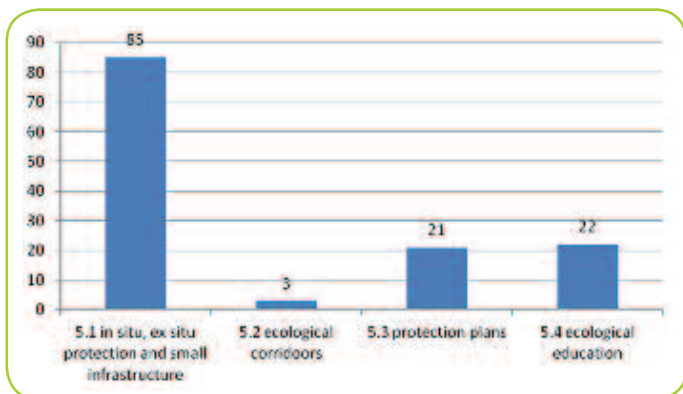
State budget units (SBU) applied for the greatest share, 42% of funds from the Priority Axis V allocation (jointly **SBU and National Parks**), **non-government organisations (NGO)** applied for 32% of the allocation, while the **local municipal administration units (LMA)**, **research and development units** together with **universities (Science)** and the organizational units of the **State Forests (SF)** applied for about 8-10% each.

USAGE OF ALLOCATION, CONTRACTS SIGNED

As result of a positive second degree assessment 131 contracts were signed (situation as of August 30, 2012), and about 85% of the available within Priority Axis V allocation were contracted. Moreover, another 30 projects are still under evaluation (including applications within the 2012 call for proposals) and their



Use of allocation within OPI&E Priority Axis V



Number of contracts signed (various activity types)

positive assessment will render it possible to sign further contracts, to a total amount of about 51 million PLN. The figure below presents the use of the allocation.

AREA OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Projects co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund are implemented throughout the whole country and one should emphasise that regional and trans-regional projects comprise a majority.

The map presented below shows the number of projects implemented in individual voivodships.

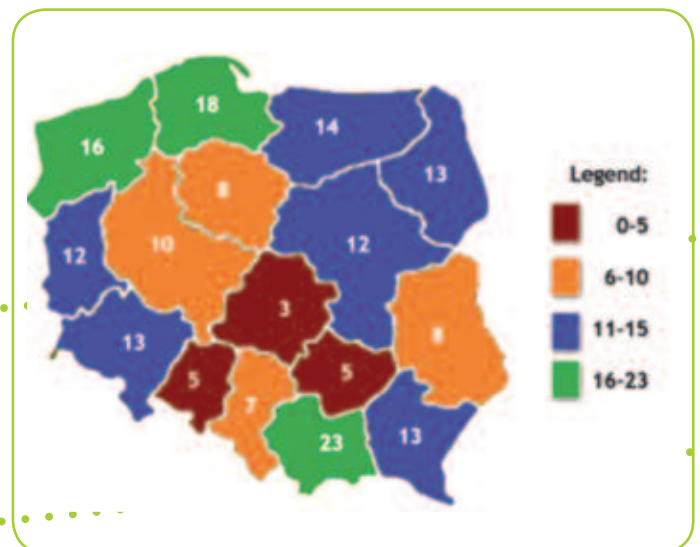


Figure: Number of projects implemented in individual voivodships

SPECIES COVERED BY PROTECTIVE MEASURES

In compliance with the Assumptions for Priority Axis V within the OPI&E, projects co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund should be of a strategic character, or in other words **implement goals listed in the strategic documents** accepted by the Council of Ministers or other relevant bodies at the national level (e.g. National Strategic Reference Framework 2007 – 2013, National Environmental Policy, National Strategy on the Protection and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity) and in the strategic documents at the UE level (e.g. Community

Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion 2007-2013, **Habitat Directive, Birds Directive, Sixth Community Environment Action Programme, Action plan: Halting biodiversity decline by 2010 and beyond).**

Thus, when assessing applications for financing from the ERDF, the number and status of species was taken into consideration, as well as the rank of areas to be covered by the protective actions within projects. **Priority was given to projects related to the Natura 2000 network.**

As result, plants are the taxonomic group most often represented in projects implemented within Priority Axis V of the OPI&E (240 species in 19 projects, table 1). Among animals, birds are the most often represented group (47.5%), principally those occurring in endangered habitats covered by the project, and mammals (15.8), as a rule covered by individual protective actions. Not one project concentrates on the protection of fungi, or marks out this taxonomic group as occurring within the area covered by the given project.

The following species were covered by protective activities within the largest number of projects implemented within the framework of the OPI&E:

- Round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia* L.) (5 projects, including 4 aiming at the protection of valuable habitats and one gene bank for Karonosze plants),



Fot. R. Stanko

- European bison (*Bison bonasus*) (4 projects aiming at the protection of the European bison, including 1 nationwide and the remaining dividing the country into North-east, North-west and South),

- European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) (covered by individual protective action within 3 projects implemented within the Mazowsze, Warmia-and-Mazury and Lublin voivodships),



Fot. A. Kotowicz

- Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) (4 projects, of which 1 aims at the protection of amphibians within the Gorceński National Park and the remaining aim at the protection of valuable habitats),

- Butterflies: scarce large blue (*Phengaris teleius*) and large copper (*Lycaena dispar*) (4 projects each), dusky large blue (*Phengaris nausithous*) and marsh fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) (3 projects each) – including 2 projects aiming at the protection of butterfly habitats, covering the Lower Silesia, Opole and Lublin voivodships.



Fot. Gawlik



Fot. A. Wilińska

The species covered by protective measures are listed both in the Polish Red Book of Threatened Species and in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Taxonomy groups	habitats	plants	animals	birds	mammals	insects	amphibians	fish	reptiles	molluscs
Total number of species / habitats covered by protective activities	50	240	101	48	16	12	11	10	2	2

Table 1. Species appearing within the area of Project implementation

Protective measures cover most of the forest and peat bog habitats, including:

- transitional bogs and marshlands,
- quagmires with peat-building plants,
- degraded quagmires, capable of natural and stimulated regeneration,
- forests and swamp forests,
- riparian forest (*Fraxino-Alnetum*).

Habitats	forests	marine habitats	wetlands	meadows or greens	inland waters	heather or herbs
Area covered by protective activities (ha)	21 975	14 712	8 877	7 529	2 786	340

Tab. 2. Estimated area of habitats, on which the projects are implemented.

The habitats listed above are covered by the Natura 2000 special protection network on the basis of the Habitats Directive.

Forest habitats (21 975 ha) take the first place also as regards area (table 2), while the second place falls to marine habitats (14 712 ha), covered by protective activities within one project for the Puck Bay. Peat bogs comprise an estimated 90% of marshland areas covered by projects within the framework of OPI&E Priority Axis V, in total 8 877 ha.

EXAMPLE PROJECTS CO-FINANCED FROM THE ERDF

Bellow are presented model projects financed from funds allocated to OPI&E Priority Axis V. Among them are projects implemented by state budget units, non-government organisations, State Forest units and local municipal authorities.

Projects of the Karkonosze National Park

All projects implemented by the Karkonosze National Park (two of them are presented below) constitute mutually supplementing elements aiming at a common, long-term objective – the restoration of habitats to conditions in which human interference into nature may be limited to a necessary minimum or

totally eliminated. Those projects constitute a planned, systematic continuation of earlier activities and open the possibility for introducing further stages of restoration and protection of the Park eco-systems.

Moreover, the Karkonosze National Park, open to co-operation with other subjects, realizes numerous projects in close co-operation with the Kostrzyca Forest Gene Bank. However, those are not partner projects, as the Beneficiaries have elaborated a method of planning and implementation of mutually complementary projects, each one of which receives

a separate grant. Such a form of dividing tasks and responsibility makes it easier to reach the desired objectives, engages numerous subjects and favours an exchange of experiences. As result, the projects are more effective and a possibility appears to introduce complex, nationwide solutions for the protection of species and habitats.

Project title

Complex protection of forest ecosystems in the Karkonosze National Park

Project type

In situ protection of species and habitats

Background

Inadequate forest management and anthropopressure resulted in changes in the species composition of the Karkonosze forest habitats. Those changes led not only to differences in the species and age of trees, but affected also the composition and numbers of



Fot. R. Rapata

the occurring fauna species. Changes in the species composition of both flora and fauna led to more disturbing consequences: changes in the water and soil conditions.

Project objectives

- restoration of the proper species composition of Luzulo luzuloidis-Fagetum and the fir and spruce (*Vaccinio-Piceion*) forest habitats
- restoration of the correct spatial structure of those habitats
- improvement of the living conditions of rare flora and fauna species (including 13 endangered species)
- restricting human movement to marked pathways

Description

In order to restore the natural environment of the Karkonosze National Park it is planned to rebuild the disturbed Luzulo luzuloidis-Fagetum and the fir and spruce (*Vaccinio-Piceion*) forest habitats. The restoration of the correct species and age composition of the stand will protect the soil and improve the living conditions for the flora and fauna characteristic for this area. To limit the anthropopressure a modernisation is proposed of 12 km of didactic trails and the construction of 800 m of wooden footbridges, thus steering the tourist movement.

Expected results

- the biodiversity and complexity of ecological systems maintained
- habitats safeguarded from degradation and species extinction over an area of 320 ha
- about 286 thousand tree seedlings planted, including European silver fir (*Abies alba*) beech (*Fagus L.*), sycamore maple (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata Mill*), common hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus L.*), oak (*Quercus robur L.*), willow (*Salix silesiaca Willd.* and *Salix lapponum*)

Project duration: 2009-2012

Project value: 6.6 million PLN

EU grant: 5.5 million PLN

More information about the project

www.kpnmab.pl



Fot. Archiwum KPN

Project title

Protection of the Karkonosze National Park's most valuable eco-systems. Modernisation of the trail above subalpine forests.

Project type

Construction or modernisation of small infrastructure used to protect areas against excessive and uncontrolled tourist pressure

Background

Within the area of the Karkonosze National Park 117.6 km of tourist trails are marked out, what gives a mean trawl density of 2,8 km/km² – the highest mean in all Polish National Parks.

The areas covered by the project comprises this part of the Karkonosze through which the green tourist trails passes. This region is an extremely valuable mosaic of habitats of a considerable importance for nature protection. For this reason it is necessary to minimize the negative effect that the presence of humans has on the surrounding species and plant habitats. Excessive tourist movement may lead to the following principal dangers: erosion processes, treading of plants, disturbing the natural water runoff, introducing species foreign to the Karkonosze, littering.

Project objectives

- restoration of biodiversity and complexity of ecological systems in the direct neighbourhood of tourist trails
- safeguarding against degradation or extinction of species of considerable ecological importance

- limiting the erosion processes and restoration of correct water systems
- increasing the area covered by endangered habitats and the flora and fauna species that are characteristic for them
- increasing the safety and culture of sightseeing, heightening ecological sensitivity and improving the awareness of the necessity to protect nature

Description

The area covered by the project amounts to 196 hectares, of which 107 hectares (54%) falls to habitats listed in the Habitat Directive (92/43/EWG): Mountain pine (*Pinus mugo Turra*), sub-alpine scrub, mountain transitional bogs and swamps, mountain siliceous screes, acidophilus sub-alpine forests, rock walls and siliceous cliffs overgrown with plants. The project provides for the following activities: anti-erosion constructions on the tourist trail and in its direct neighbourhood, limiting the possibilities of tramping valuable plant communities, changing the course of tourist trails to protect plant communities within the Small Śnieżny Kocioł, reconstructing the correct species composition of changed plant communities, restitution of rare and endangered species, increasing biodiversity basing on local plant ecotypes, ecological education.

Expected results

- over 196 ha of the Park cleared of foreign species
- about 9 km of tourist trails modernised
- the anthropopressure limited on an area of 1440 m², and in effect a correct protection of ecosystems retained in the Karkonosze National Park on an area of over 190 ha

Project duration: 2009-2011

Project value: 3.1 million PLN

EU grant: 2.6 million PLN

More information about the project

www.kpnmab.pl

Project title

Protection of the Karkonosze National Park's most valuable plant species – Live Gene Bank, Jagniątków

Project type

Ex situ species protection, protection of the gene pool

Background

The Karkonosze vegetation is unique on an European scale. The long history of the vegetation development (since the time of glaciation) as also the influence of the damp oceanic climate resulted in the forming of peculiar plant communities, which merge



Fot. R. Rapala

together alpine, arctic, northern and oceanic components. Unfortunately, the anthropopressure exerted on those ecosystems leads to a decrease of their biodiversity. In the past, the principal problem was the activity of humans, currently it is the pollution of the environment by outside sources. The result is atmospheric pollution by smokes, dusts and gases and in particular the eutrophication of habitats and an excessive development of synanthropic plants and plant communities around hostels and other buildings, from where they may expand to natural phytocenoses.

Project objectives

- preservation of gene resources in form of genetic archives
- reconstruction of biodiversity through reintroduction

- supporting the process of reconstruction of beech tree habitats, fir and spruce forests and the Sudetes sub-alpine spruce-trees
- preservation of the gene resources of rare and endangered plants in form of a live gene bank, as also enriching the gene resources of species occurring in isolated stands

Description

The following activities will be carried out within the project: collecting seeds and plant elements for long-term storage, multiplication of plant species in the soil and in controlled conditions, enriching biodiversity on the basis of local plant ecotypes, creating genetic archives, production of seeds and seedlings for introducing species into natural stands, elaboration of a restitution programme for the most endangered flora species, monitoring of natural stands of endangered species, ecological education.

Expected results

- ten thousand plants obtained
- 140 thousand seedlings of forest trees and bushes obtained
- 4 foil tents for nursery and herbaceous production, 9 tents with a drainage system
- 50 lines of Scott Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) of the rock ecotype collected in a genetic archive
- 120 samples transferred from the Kostrzyce Forest Gene Bank for ex vitro breeding
- a collection made of 88 samples of seeds and plant parts from natural stands and 100 seed samples from the nursery foil tents

Project duration: 2010-2013

Project value: 2.3 million PLN

EU grant: 2.0 million PLN

More information about the project

www.kpnmab.pl

Other interesting projects financed by ERDF

Project title

Restitution of bog vegetation on degraded raised bogs of the Pomorze voivodship

Beneficiary

The Foundation for the Development of Gdańsk University

Project type

In situ protection of species and habitats



Background

The project is aimed at degraded raised bogs in the Pomorze voivodship, where industrial peat digging was terminated. Bogs comprise valuable habitats, where one may find numerous protected species of terrestrial and freshwater fauna. Industrial bogs are characterized by specific habitat conditions, which either render impossible or difficult a spontaneous regeneration of bog vegetation. In order to restore the vegetation of this type of habitats it is necessary to introduce bog species and in particular peat moss (*Sphagnaceae*).

The bog area covered by the project belongs to the Natura 2000 network and should be covered by active protection with the aim of restoring the characteristic abiotic, biocenotic and functional properties of peat-bogs.

Project objectives

- stop the degradation of raised bog habitats
- raise the level of ground waters and increase the moisture of the bog surface
- improve the physical and microbial properties of the bog substratum
- settle bog vegetation on the post-exploitation areas
- increase biodiversity and improve the ecological structure of the bog surface

Description

The principal object of the project is the reintroduction of four species of bog plants characterized by a high ability of settle in post pit mining areas – tussock cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum* L.) and mosses: *Sphagnum palustre* L., *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *Sphagnum russowii*. Of importance is the restoration of proper peat-bog hydration by liquidating part of the drainage ditches in the post-exploitation areas.

The project is realized on post pit mining areas on two peat-bogs: Czarne Bagno (Balck Marsh) and Żarnowska, Pomorskie voivodship.

Expected results

- the appropriate condition of ecosystems restored on an area of 5.4 hectares and their protection ensured
- introduced four species of peat-bog plants participating in secondary succession on post-exploitation areas
- improvement of water conditions, permanent settlement and further development of the species introduced on the territory covered by the project. It is expected that in subsequent years a spontaneous succession will take place of other species typical for raised peat-bogs, together with a gradual restitution of a bog biocoenosis

Project duration: 2009-2012

Project value: 539 000 PLN

EU grant: 458 000 PLN

More information about the project

www.frug.ug.edu.pl

Project title

Protection of the lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) in Poland

Beneficiary

POLISH SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF NATURE „PRO NATURA”

Project type

In situ protection of species and habitats

Background

The lesser horseshoe bat is one of the smallest Polish bats. Its numbers are dropping drastically, both



Fot. R. Szkuclarek

in Poland and in the whole of Europe. The number of adequate shelters for reproductive colonies is decreasing. The bats, while hibernating during the winter months, are often disturbed; their feeding grounds and flight corridors are destroyed and the information about the places of their occurrence is insufficient.

Project objectives

- preserving the population of the lesser horseshoe bat in Poland and creating conditions for its increase
- securing the winter locations
- reconstruction of the bats' communication corridors
- elaborating a system of control and protection of the lesser horseshoe bat habitats

Description

In order to improve the situation of the lesser horseshoe bat in Poland one must ensure adequate habitat conditions.

Within the project, shelters for summer roosts are ensured by bat-friendly renovation of attics of 10 old, historical sacral buildings, populated by colonies of the lesser horseshoe bat. Moreover, the installation of special bars will secure 17 winter roosts of the lesser horseshoe bat. Filling in the gaps in the migration corridors by planting trees and bushes will render possible the migration of 8 lesser horseshoe bat colonies. Inventory, monitoring and continuous care of the bat roosts will make it possible to assess the project results. By protecting the lesser horseshoe bat we are protecting all bat species which use similar shelters and environments (including the extremely rare greater mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*) and the pond bat (*Myotis dasycneme*). The project will draw attention to the importance of those insectivorous animals in the environment.

Expected results

- preservation of about 80% of the currently known reproductive colonies of the lesser horseshoe bat, i.e. a minimum of 64 roosts
- information about the roosts of the lesser horseshoe bat collected from an area of 36 districts, what will render it possible to supplement the protection plans
- the attention of the population drawn to the importance for the environment of those insectivorous animals

Improving the living conditions of the lesser horseshoe bat is connected with the renovation and modernisation of often valuable historical monuments, principally old Catholic and Orthodox churches. All works (including the change and conservation of roofing, installing guano platforms, restoration of tree lines) take into consideration both the needs of bats and the necessity to protect the historical buildings from destruction and retain their aesthetic and historical value. Thus the project contributes to the preservation of the local heritage.

Project duration: 2009-2013

Project value: 9 million PLN

EU grant: 8 million PLN

More information about the project

www.pronatura.org.pl

Project title

Canalizing the tourist movement within the Natura 2000 area of the Sandomierz Forest

Beneficiary

Kolbuszowa District State Forest Office

Project type

Construction or modernisation of small infrastructure used to protect areas against excessive and uncontrolled tourist pressure

Background

The Sandomierz Forest lies between large urban agglomerations (Rzeszów, Stalowa Wola, Tarnobrzeg, Mielec), what means it is exposed to considerable pressure from the inhabitants. Weekend and vacation tourism is very popular. Due to the observed increase in tourist movement the District State Forest Offices undertook activities aiming at a sensible restriction of the tourist movement. Over a dozen nature trails were created, over a dozen kilometres of bicycle routes were marked, "Green classes" and parking sites were prepared. Due to the increasing volume of bicycle and foot tourism it is necessary to continue the development of small tourist infrastructure.

Project objectives

- protection of european roller (*Coracias garrulus*), Carabus violaceus, hermit beetle (*Osmoderma eremita*), stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), great capricorn beetle (*Cerambyx cerdo*) and the lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) by directing tourists to areas far from the habitats of those species



Fot. B. Peret

- maintaining and increasing the population of the European roller (*Coracias garrulus*) and its habitats through monitoring, placing and cleaning nesting boxes, placing look-outs on forest clear-cuts
- protection of the hermit beetle habitats by marking the trees it populates as nature monuments, fencing or lying out timber
- restricting entrances into ecologically valuable locations by digging up illegal passages, building forest gates, placing information boards

Description

The project implementation is based on the modernisation and construction of bicycle routes, nature trails, parking sites and resting places. Those objects are located in forests, in the neighbourhood of urban agglomerations, near resting places and parking sites. In those locations roofs have been put up with tables, benches and fireplaces. Also, information boards have been placed, informing about proper behaviour in the forest as well as the ecological value of the given location. On the nature routes thematic stops have been located, presenting information about elements of nature and its protection. The trails have been marked on the basis of existing solutions and methods, so as to make them adequate to the existing natural and ground conditions and meet the requirements of tourists visiting the region.

Expected results

- tourist movement restricted in order to protect valuable ecological resources and thus ensure that ecosystems on an area of almost 130 000 hectares will receive adequate protection
- two new bicycle trails created and 16 existing modernised
- twelve small parking sites prepared

Project duration: 2007-2011

Project value: 2.4 million PLN

EU grant: 2.0 million PLN

More information about the project

www.krosno.lasy.gov.pl

Project title

Supporting restitution and protection of the Baltic mammals in Poland

Beneficiary

WWF Poland (World Wildlife Fund)

Project type

In situ protection of species and habitats

Background

The project concentrates on two species of sea mammals: grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) and harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*). The grey seal population in the Baltic sea consists of about 20 thousand animals. However, no seals have been



Fot. D. Bógdat

observed in the southern Baltic, from Lithuania to Germany, within their historical habitats. Current observations confirm the absence of reproduction and re-colonisation of the Polish Baltic sea-coast. In the case of the harbour porpoise, the estimation of the population size is difficult, but the fishing statistics and reports of their sighting indicate a drastic decrease of the numbers of this species.

A lack of decisive action will render impossible the restitution of the grey seal population and may lead to the extinction of the harbour porpoise in the Baltic sea.

Project objectives

- supporting the restitution and protection of Baltic mammals in Poland as realisation of obligations arising from the Helsinki Convention and Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas – ASCOBANS)
- protecting seals and the harbour porpoise from the threat posed by humans
- creating a programme for the protection of Baltic mammals
- strengthening the seal population with animals born at the Hel Maritime Station, Gdańsk University Institute of Oceanography and the Warsaw Zoological Gardens

Description

Within the project field patrols have been organised covering the whole of the Polish sea-coast, ad hoc air inspections are conducted and a continuous audiovisual observation of the key seal refuges. Such activities render it possible to precisely determine the range and type of protective action that must be introduced within the future national protective programmes for those species. Basing on the observations conducted within the project a data base is created, covering the Baltic mammals and their refuges.

An important element of the Project will consist of the restitution of grey seals, conducted by the Hel Maritime Station, Gdańsk University Institute of Oceanography and aiming at restoration of local colonies and improving the monitoring of the animals introduced.

Expected results

- populations of the grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) and harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) restored to the Polish sea-coast
- living conditions of those species improved over 1200 hectares of the Polish coast
- 18 animals obtained from the reproductive flock of the Hel Maritime Station, Gdańsk University Institute of Oceanography, and introduced into the natural environment
- documents elaborated for the protection programmes of the grey seal and harbour porpoise

Project duration: 2009-2013

Project value: 6.3 million PLN

EU grant: 4.6 million PLN

More information about the project

www.ssakibaltyckie.wwf.pl.pl



Fot. M. Rosińska

Project title

Modernisation of the infrastructure restricting the excessive tourist pressure in the Blue Springs (Niebieskie Źródła) Reserve

Beneficiary

Tomaszów Mazowiecki gmina and city

Project type

Construction or modernisation of small infrastructure used to protected areas against excessive and uncontrolled tourist pressure

Background

The Blue Springs inanimate nature reserve lies in the valley of the Pilica river, within the city limits of Tomaszów Mazowiecki. It was created in 1961 on an area of 28.77 ha to protect the karst topography and the accompanying it natural forest, scrubland, water and reed bed biocenoses. In the limestone bedrock pulsating springs fill pools up to 4 m deep. The water covers broads and channels to be drained of finally to the Pilica river. The uncontrolled tourist movement in this region leads to a devastation of the reserve landscape.

Project objectives

- restoring the appropriate condition of the protected area and preserving the species endangered and biodiversity by way of safeguarding them against an excessive and uncontrolled tourist pressure
- restricting (principally in the eastern part of the reserve) and directing the tourist movement to the main walking alley
- creating a didactic pathway

Description

Within the project, in order to protect the reserve, illegal paths have been fenced or liquidated, trees and bushes of native species have been planted, the banks of one peninsula have been reinforced, a path joining the peninsula with the dike has been marked out and paved, the surface of the walking dike has been reinforced, a didactic path has been arranged in the reserve with information boards about the animal and plant species to be found. A tourist guide has been published "On a didactic pathway" in Polish and English.

Expected results

- illegal paths fenced and liquidated
- trees and bushes of deciduous native species planted on a total distance of 70 metres
- a didactic trail prepared
- banks strengthened on a distance of 25 metres
- the surface of the peninsula reinforced with gravel on an area of about 100 m²
- the path on the cliff reinforced, starting from the culvert on the border of the reserve in Ludwików, along the blue tourist trail, over a distance of about 70 m
- two driveways prepared over the water culvert near Ludwików
- a reinforcing network placed on the western bank of the principal walking dike



Fot. C. Korkosz

Project duration:	2008-2010
Project value:	714 000 PLN
EU grant:	564 000 PLN

More information about the project

www.tomaszow-maz.eu

FINAL CONCLUSIONS / SUMMARY

In 2010 the Implementing Authority - Coordination Centre for Environmental Projects – commissioned an evaluation of the financing model implemented within the OPI&E for environmental protection projects. Below are presented some conclusions from the evaluation report:

- the interests of the applicants correspond with the themes listed as priorities in the operational programme (the greatest number of applications was submitted within activity 5.1 In situ protection of species and habitats),
- of the greatest interest, when taken in relation to the funds available, proved to be activity 5.4 Promotion of ecological habits favourable to nature protection including biodiversity and in particular sub-activity 5.4.2 Educational activities directed at local communities on protected areas, for which the applications for co-financing significantly exceeded the amount allocated, what shows

that the needs for activities in ecological education are considerable; moreover, these requirements correspond with themes identified as having priority (emphasis on the education of local communities),

- the structure of subjects applying for financing indicates that the largest group consists of non-governmental organisations, what should be considered as positive, due to the often emphasised necessity of strengthening their potential; however, the largest group of entities implementing projects consists of state budget units, principally National Parks; the third group of applicants (as regards numbers) consists of State Forest organisational units,
- local municipal administration units (LMA) show a very small interest in the implementation of projects related to nature protection; the awareness of the benefits arising from adequately preserved environmental resources needs to be increased in this group of beneficiaries,
- there is a considerable differentiation between regions in the projects implemented, partly related to the different concentration of protected areas in different voivodships.

Among the enterprises financed within the OPI&E special attention should be given to complex projects which, in the case of projects related to nature, may take on very different forms. Among those described one may find such which cover complex activities re-



Fot. J. Tomaszewicz

ferring to a given species throughout the whole country or region, but also projects responding to the most important problems identified for a given voivodship or ecological complex. The audit identified also examples of projects which, support simultaneously environmental protection, cultural heritage and improve conditions for recreation.

Worthy of attention are also projects that are complementary in relation to other activities financed from the OPI&E. In this group one may find activities related to the same species, but conducted in different locations (European bison, European pond turtle, black grouse) - protecting different populations of the same species may strengthen the effects of individual projects. A similar complementing of projects may be observed in the case of the ex situ protection of endangered plant species, the impact of which may be observed almost throughout the whole country.

To summarise the experiences gathered in relation to the financing of activities aiming at environmental protection and limiting losses arising from a decrease in biodiversity, one may draw the following conclusions, which could prove helpful in the programming of subsequent financial instruments:

- the best effects will be obtained if the financial resources are concentrated on the key, environmentally valuable areas together with a complex, integrated approach to solving the problems identified, e.g.: increasing the potential of Natura



Fot. Z. Grabowiecki

The audit conducted analysed also the offer of other programmes financing environmental protection, which still are available or were available in Poland over the last ten years. The offer presented by the OPI&E Priority Axis V, LIFE+ and the funds of the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management complement each other. The demonstration projects implemented within LIFE+ may constitute an inspiration for Polish subjects interested in nature protection.

2000 areas by a complex support of activities, relating to both environmental protection and social and economic stimulation of the local communities, including the development of green infrastructure, stimulation of green jobs, promotion of ecologically valuable areas, etc.,

- When preparing programmes financing activities related to nature protection one should remember that their specificity makes it necessary to create flexible rules for project accounting and implementing (those are often atypical projects, merging investment with soft, non-investment elements),

- The enormous interest in activity 5.4 Promotion of ecological habits favourable to nature protection including biodiversity indicated the necessity to designate larger funds for this type of project, not only within the ERDF, but also within the ECF (e.g. green jobs, promoting knowledge among business men about ecological and economical benefits arising from increasing energy efficiency and technological changes leading to savings of natural resources, promotion of eco-innovation).



Fot. J.Chowaniec



Fot. K. Wypychowski

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