



Number 30 • June 2011

# natura 2000

ISSN 1026-6151

EUROPEAN COMMISSION NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

## The start of a new era for EU biodiversity policy

### EU BIODIVERSITY POLICY

*The EU's new Biodiversity Strategy*

### MANAGING NATURA 2000

*Designating SCIs as SACs*



nature



EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION



environment

## Contents

The EU 2020  
Biodiversity  
Strategy .....3–7

Natura 2000  
barometer..... 8–9

Designating  
Special Areas of  
Conservation ..... 10–13

NaturaNews..... 14–16

## Editorial



Commissioner Potočnik

# A new era for EU Biodiversity Policy

As biodiversity conservation has been one of my top priorities since taking office, it gives me great pleasure to announce the adoption of a new Biodiversity Strategy for the European Union which sets the course for the next ten years.

Protecting the diversity of species and habitats around us not only maintains the beauties of nature. It also makes good economic sense. Healthy ecosystems offer us an impressive range of services for free. Investing in maintaining these services today is therefore an altogether smarter option than having to pay for expensive technological solutions later on, once they are gone. According to the TEEB study, global business opportunities from investing in biodiversity could be worth up to 6 trillion US dollars by 2050. On the other hand, if we continue business as usual, we could end up with accumulated welfare losses of between 2–4.5 trillion US dollars over the next 50 years.

The stakes are high on all counts: economically, ecologically and socially. It is for this reason I have attached a particular importance to ensuring that the EU sets a new and ambitious course not only to halt – but also to reverse – biodiversity loss within the next ten years. The new EU strategy is designed to do just that. It is built around six ambitious yet realistic targets that focus on the main drivers of biodiversity loss and lays down a blueprint for action until 2020.

The timing of the new EU strategy is also highly relevant since it comes at the moment when EU institutions are embarking on discussions over the new Multiannual Financial Framework which will determine priorities for EU spending for 2014 onwards. Targets 1 and 3 of the new strategy aim to ensure the 26,000 sites within the Natura 2000 Network are effectively managed for the benefit of both nature and people and well integrated into other key EU policy areas such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries. But this can only happen if there are sufficient resources available to do so.

Investing properly in Natura 2000 will not only help ensure we meet our biodiversity targets for 2020 but will enable us to invest in our own future as well. If the right kinds of investments are made now we should reap the benefits for many, many years – and generations – to come.

**Commissioner Janez Potočnik**



© naturepl.com



© David Kraer



© Daniel Dine

Cover: Bee on foxglove  
© Stephen Dalton/naturepl.com





*Mediterranean scrub in full bloom, Greece – an EU biodiversity hotspot*

© European Commission

***In May the Commission adopted a new European Union strategy to conserve and enhance biodiversity and ensure its sustainable use***

**New EU strategy adopted**

On the 3 May 2011 the Commission published a new landmark strategy to improve the state of Europe's biodiversity over the next decade. This comes just six months after the adoption of a Global Strategic Plan to combat biodiversity loss at the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Japan, and re-affirms the EU's strong commitment to help avert a global biodiversity crisis.

The new EU Biodiversity Strategy lays down the policy foundations and actions that will be put in place at EU level over the next ten years to meet the headline target set by the EU Heads of State and Government in March 2010. This calls on the EU to *'halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU*

*contribution to averting global biodiversity loss'*.

The new strategy follows on from the 2006 EU Biodiversity Action Plan, learning lessons from its implementation and raising the level of ambition for 2020. Thus, in addition to halting the loss of biodiversity, it also highlights, for the first time, the immense value of ecosystem services and the need to restore such services for the benefit of the environment and society alike.

The EU strategy is built around six mutually supportive and inter-dependent targets which address the main drivers of biodiversity loss and aim to reduce the principal pressures on nature and ecosystem services in the EU. It focuses in particular on anchoring biodiversity objectives into other key sectoral policies, stepping up efforts to fully implement existing EU nature legislation and closing important policy gaps. Global

aspects are also addressed to ensure the EU contributes fully to implementing global biodiversity commitments it signed up to last year in Japan.

The six targets covered by the EU strategy focus on:

- the full implementation of the EU nature legislation to protect biodiversity;
- better protection for ecosystems, and more use of green infrastructure;
- more sustainable agriculture and forestry;
- better management of EU fish stocks and more sustainable fisheries;
- tighter controls on invasive alien species; and
- a greater EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

Each target is further translated into a set of 20 prioritised actions and other accompanying measures designed to ensure these ambitions are fully realised.

## OBJECTIVE 1

### To fully implement EU nature legislation

The first target focuses on ensuring the full and timely implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives. This is critical if the species and habitat types they aim to protect are to reach a favourable conservation status (or analogous state in the case of birds) across the EU. Currently, only 17% of the biogeographic assessments of habitat types and species protected under the Habitats Directive showed a favourable conservation status, the majority being in an unfavourable-inadequate or unfavourable-bad state.

The new EU strategy sets as its target to significantly improve the number of assessments showing a favourable or improved conservation status for habitats and species under both nature directives (see detailed target in the box below), within the next ten years.

Recognising that it takes time for certain rare and endangered species and habitat types to respond to conservation measures and that attaining favourable conservation status is often only possible over the medium to long term, the target focuses also on achieving a significant measurable improvement in the parameters that underpin the assessment of their conservation status. For species protected under the Habitats Directive the parameters include population, habitats for the species, range and future prospects. For habitat types they include the area covered, their structure and functioning as well as typical species, range and future prospects.

Having a time-bound quantified target should help to accelerate the implementation of the two directives. In this context, the new strategy places particular emphasis on ensuring the effective management of Natura 2000 sites, including the development and timely implementation of management plans or equivalent instruments which set out the conservation and restoration measures required for each site.

Other specific actions which have been identified to achieve this target include:

- the completion of the Natura 2000 Network, especially in the marine environment;
- the provision of adequate financing for the conservation measures required for Natura 2000 sites at both EU and national/regional level;
- the integration of species and habitat protection and management requirements into key land and water policies, both within and outside Natura 2000;
- the promotion and sharing of experience, good practice and cross-border collaboration on the management of Natura 2000; and
- increased cooperation with key sectors and stakeholder groups to help improve enforcement of the two directives.

It is also foreseen to launch a major communication campaign on Natura 2000 in 2013 and to improve and streamline monitoring and reporting under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive, as well as to increase access to information on Natura 2000 data and EU biodiversity in general.

#### Target 1

*To halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status so that, by 2020, compared to current assessments:*

- 100% more habitat assessments and 50% more species assessments under the Habitats Directive show an improved conservation status; and
- 50% more species assessments under the Birds Directive show a secure or improved status.

## OBJECTIVE 2

### Maintain and enhance ecosystems and their services

The second target focuses on maintaining and enhancing ecosystem services and restoring degraded ecosystems across the EU, in line with the global target adopted in Japan last year to restore at least 15% of all degraded ecosystems.

The target is set in recognition of the fact that the EU is one of the most fragmented continents in the world. This not only affects its biodiversity but also undermines the many services that healthy ecosystems provide society for free, such as a clean and plentiful water supply, protection against floods and erosion etc.

Ensuring that restoration leads to enhanced ecosystem services requires particular attention to be paid to integrating healthy ecosystems into the wider landscape, for instance through better spatial planning. In this context, one of the first actions foreseen under the new strategy is the development of an EU-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy by 2012.

This aims to promote investments in Green Infrastructure across the EU, which has potential to deliver multiple benefits from ecosystems at a comparably low cost, while providing job and business opportunities. Green Infrastructure contributes significantly to climate change mitigation and adaptation. It will strengthen and restore the ecosystems functionality and resilience across the wider environment. It will also improve connectivity between core Natura 2000 areas, so that ecosystems continue to deliver their many vital public goods and services to society. A Green Infrastructure Strategy encourages a more efficient and intelligent use of our valuable natural capital – therefore contributing to the broader objectives of the EU's flagship Resource Efficiency Initiative.

The new biodiversity strategy also foresees that the state of ecosystems across the EU and the value of their services will be mapped and assessed, with a view to integrating these values into accounting and reporting systems at EU and national level. This follows up on a key recommendation of the international study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB). As a next step, a strategic framework to set priorities for ecosystem restoration should be established.

Finally, action under this target will seek to promote a wider no-net-loss approach to biodiversity and ecosystems services by, on the one hand, preventing negative impacts on biodiversity resulting from EU funded projects, plans and programmes, and on the other ensuring that any unavoidable impacts are compensated for or offset.

#### Target 2

*By 2020, ecosystems and their services are maintained and enhanced by establishing Green Infrastructure and restoring at least 15 % of degraded ecosystems.*



*The economic value of insect pollination in the EU has been estimated to be worth €15 billion a year*



### OBJECTIVE 3

#### Ensure the sustainability of agriculture and forestry

The third target focuses on improving the integration of biodiversity conservation into other key policy sectors, particularly in relation to agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

The forthcoming reform of the CAP and CFP and the new Multiannual Financial Framework in 2013 will present important new opportunities to enhance synergies and maximise coherence between biodiversity protection objectives and those of these other key policy sectors and should, if targeted properly, lead to a measurable improvement in the conservation of species and habitats that depend on, or are affected by, these activities.

The actions foreseen under the biodiversity strategy are designed to tap into these opportunities as much as possible. In the case of the CAP reform, the Commission will for instance propose that direct payments reward the delivery of environmental public goods which go beyond cross-compliance, such as the maintenance of permanent pasture, the provision of ecological set-asides or support for Natura 2000.

Efforts will also be made to simplify the GAEC (Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions) and cross-compliance standards and to integrate quantified biodiversity targets into the Rural Development strategies and programmes.

In the case of forestry, Member States and the Commission will encourage the adoption of forest management plans or equivalent instruments for all public forests as well as certain private forests, whilst ensuring these plans are in line with the principle of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and incorporate measures that enhance biodiversity (such as the provision of optimal levels of deadwood) and improve the conservation status of Natura 2000 forest sites where needed.

#### Target 3

3A) *Agriculture: By 2020, maximise areas under agriculture across grasslands, arable land and permanent crops that are covered by biodiversity-related measures under the CAP so as to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and to bring about a measurable improvement in the conservation status of species and habitats that depend on or are affected by agriculture and in the provision of ecosystem services as compared to the EU2010 Baseline, thus contributing to enhance sustainable management.*

3B) *Forests: By 2020, Forest Management Plans or equivalent instruments, in line with Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), are in place for all forests that are publicly owned and for forest holdings above a certain size\*\* (to be defined by the Member States or regions and communicated in their Rural Development Programmes) that receive funding under the EU Rural Development Policy so as to bring about a measurable improvement(\*) in the conservation status of species and habitats that depend on or are affected by forestry and in the provision of related ecosystem services as compared to the EU 2010 Baseline.*

(\*) For both targets, improvement is to be measured against the quantified enhancement targets for the conservation status of species and habitats of EU interest in Target 1 and the restoration of degraded ecosystems under Target 2.

(\*\*) For smaller forest holdings, Member States may provide additional incentives to encourage the adoption of Management Plans or equivalent instruments that are in line with SFM.

### OBJECTIVE 4

#### Ensure the sustainability of fisheries

As regards fisheries, the strategy focuses in particular on actions to restore fish stocks to healthy levels. This will involve, inter alia, the development and implementation of long-term management plans under the CFP so that harvest levels are set in accordance with the principles of achieving a Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).

The EU also plans to develop measures to gradually eliminate discards, reduce the by-catch of unwanted species and preserve or restore vulnerable marine ecosystems, paying particular attention to the needs of the species and habitats protected under the two EU Nature Directives and the overall objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive which aims to bring all EU marine waters up to a good environmental status by 2020.

#### Target 4

*Achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015. Achieve a population age and size distribution indicative of a healthy stock, through fisheries management with no significant adverse impacts on other stocks, species and ecosystems, in support of achieving Good Environmental Status by 2020, as required under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.*



Fishing must become more sustainable in the next ten years



Almost a third of the land within Natura 2000 is farmland



## OBJECTIVE 5

### Address the problem of invasive alien species

The fifth target fills an important policy gap at EU level, as invasive alien species (IAS) are a growing threat to biodiversity in the EU. Although the challenges posed by IAS are common to many Member States, there is currently no specific, comprehensive EU policy to address them. In light of this the Commission intends to develop a dedicated legislative instrument by 2012 to address common challenges such as IAS pathways, early detection and response, as well as containment and management. It will also integrate additional biodiversity concerns into the EU Plant and Animal Health regimes.

#### Target 5

*By 2020, Invasive Alien Species (IAS) and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.*



*Zebra mussels are an invasive alien species that is already causing significant economic damage in the EU*

© Shutterstock

## OBJECTIVE 6

### Step-up action to address the global biodiversity crisis

Finally, the last target focuses on the EU's contribution to global biodiversity conservation. The actions foreseen in the strategy aim not only to fulfil the commitments made in Japan last year and in other international fora but also to reduce the EU's own biodiversity footprint on the rest of the world.

In this context, particular attention will be paid to reducing indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. Actions will for instance be undertaken to:

- reduce the biodiversity impacts of EU consumption patterns;
- enhance the contribution of trade policy to conserving biodiversity, whilst eliminating as far as possible any negative impacts of EU trade agreements;
- 'biodiversity proof' EU development cooperation programmes and projects in order to minimise their negative impacts on biodiversity;
- provide the right market signals for biodiversity conservation, including work to reform, phase out and eliminate harmful subsidies at both EU and Member State level and to provide positive incentives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

In addition, the EU will aim to mobilise additional resources for global biodiversity conservation from all possible sources and propose legislation to implement the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation so that the EU can ratify the Protocol as soon as possible.

#### Target 6

*By 2020, the EU has stepped up its contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.*



*The World Resources Institute estimates that 75% of the planet's coral reefs would be at risk of death or extreme damage within 20 years, unless carbon emissions are cut drastically*

© iStock

## Monitoring the impact of the new Biodiversity Strategy

The Commission's Communication in January 2010 stressed the importance of having a solid scientific knowledge base upon which to measure progress and assess whether the actions undertaken are having the desired impacts on biodiversity. This led to the publication last year of the first ever EU biodiversity baseline, which gives a snapshot of the current state and trends of key biodiversity and ecosystems components across the EU in 2010.

The 2010 Baseline provides a reference point for assessing future changes in biodiversity and will therefore form a central element of the integrated framework for monitoring, assessing and reporting on progress in implementing the new strategy. But efforts will also be made to build on this first baseline in order to fill important knowledge gaps and consolidate key data from other sources. Thus, by 2020 the EU should have an even more comprehensive overview of the state of biodiversity in the EU, and of the effects of its policies and actions.

## Mobilising resources

It is clear that achieving the objectives of the new strategy will depend largely on the availability and efficient use of financial resources. In this respect the Commission will pay particular attention to securing a better uptake and distribution of existing EU funds for biodiversity and Natura 2000 and maximising co-benefits. But in these difficult economic times there will also be a need to examine ways of diversifying funding sources and developing innovative financing

mechanisms, such as payments for ecosystem services that reward those who provide public goods and services, for instance from agricultural, forest and marine ecosystems.

As regards the management of the Natura 2000 Network, which is estimated to require an annual investment of around €5.8 billion a year, it is clear that a more strategic approach to funding is urgently needed. This would greatly enhance the possibilities for Member States to tap into EU funding, and would also be in line with Article 8 of the Habitats Directive which foresees the development of a 'prioritised action framework' when sites

are designated as Special Areas of Conservation.

Finally, particular efforts will be made to monetise the value of ecosystem services in order to help convince other sectors of the socio-economic benefits of investing in biodiversity.

## Building partnerships

The new strategy and its actions will need to be pursued through a mix of sub-national, national and EU-level action which will require close

coordination to ensure consistency between EU and Member State action.

Achieving the EU 2020 targets also requires the full engagement and commitment of a wide variety of other stakeholders. Particular efforts will therefore be made during the implementation of the new strategy to reinforce co-operation and build effective long-lasting partnerships with key sectors of business and society.

*The new Biodiversity Strategy and its impact assessment are available on <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/2020.htm> along with a press pack about the strategy and its targets.*

## 20 Actions under the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy

### Target 1 Fully implement the Birds and Habitats Directives

- Action 1. Complete the establishment of the Natura 2000 Network and ensure good management
- Action 2. Ensure adequate financing of Natura 2000 sites
- Action 3. Increase stakeholder awareness and involvement and improve enforcement
- Action 4. Improve and streamline monitoring and reporting

### Target 2 Maintain and restore ecosystems and their services

- Action 5. Improve knowledge of ecosystems and their services in the EU
- Action 6. Set priorities to restore and promote the use of green infrastructure
- Action 7. Ensure no net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services

### Target 3 Increase the contribution of agriculture and forestry

- Action 8. Enhance direct payments for environmental public goods in the EU Common Agricultural Policy
- Action 9. Better target Rural Development to biodiversity conservation
- Action 10. Conserve Europe's agricultural genetic diversity
- Action 11. Encourage forest holders to protect and enhance forest biodiversity
- Action 12. Integrate biodiversity measures in forest management plans

### Target 4 Ensure the sustainable use of fisheries resources

- Action 13. Improve the management of fished stocks
- Action 14. Eliminate adverse impacts on fish stocks, species, habitats and ecosystems

### Target 5 Combat invasive alien species

- Action 15. Strengthen the EU Plant and Animal Health Regimes
- Action 16. Establish a dedicated instrument on Invasive Alien Species

### Target 6 Help avert global biodiversity loss

- Action 17. Reduce indirect drivers of biodiversity loss
- Action 18. Mobilise additional resources for global biodiversity conservation
- Action 19. 'Biodiversity proof' EU development cooperation
- Action 20. Regulate access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use



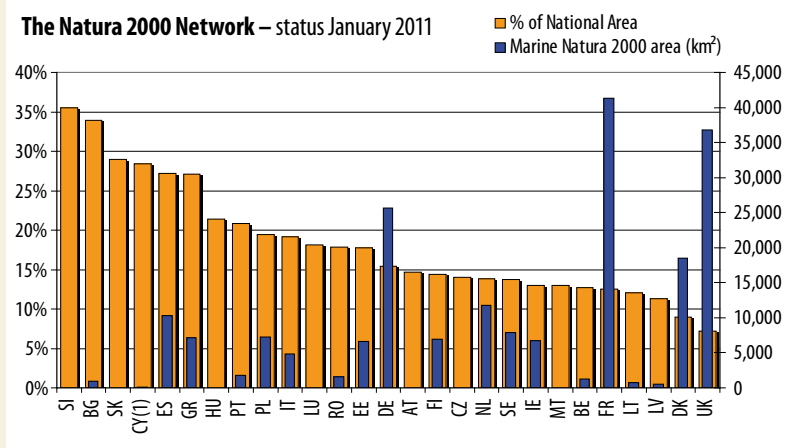
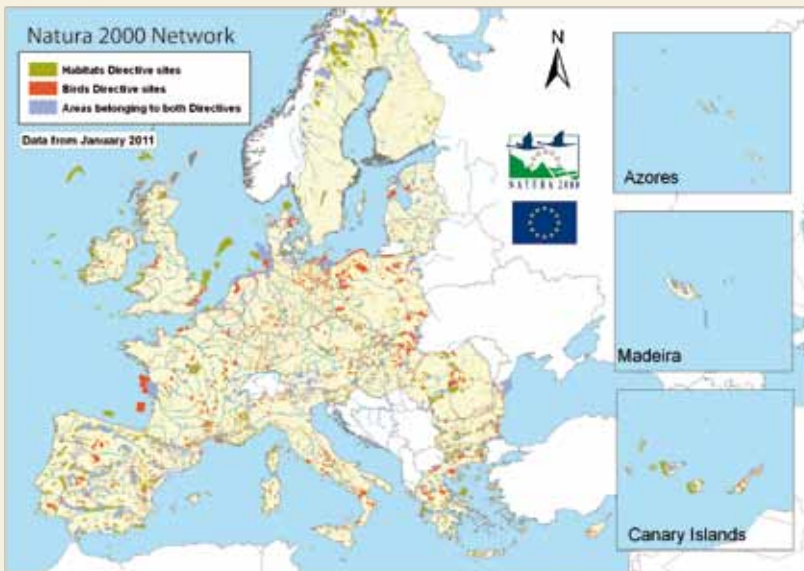
# natura 2000 barometer

## Nota Bene:

- The Natura Barometer is managed by DG ENV with the technical assistance of the European Environment Agency and is based on information officially transmitted by Member States.
- Many sites have been designated according to both Nature Directives, either in their entirety or partially. The figures for the global Natura 2000 sites (SPAs + SCIs) have been obtained by GIS analysis, using the electronic spatial boundaries provided by Member States for each of their sites. The calculation used eliminates possible overlap between Birds Directive sites and Habitats Directive sites.
- The percentage of surface area relates only to the terrestrial area that has been designated as a Natura 2000 (SPA, SCI), and does not include the marine area.
- Some Member States have designated substantial portions of their marine waters. The number of marine SPAs and marine SCIs is based on information in the Standard Data Forms (SDF) submitted by the Member States where this is available.
- Several Member States have proposed large areas including 'buffer zones', while others have proposed only the core areas. In both cases, Article 6 of the Habitats Directive applies to new activities, which are foreseen outside a Natura 2000 site but likely to affect it.



SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS (SPAs) Birds Directive



\* The area and % of territory corresponds to the area of Cyprus where the Community acquis applies at present, according to protocol 10 of the Accession Treaty of Cyprus

\*\* Due to missing information in the Standard Data Form, the marine area for these countries has been obtained by GIS analysis where necessary. The number of marine sites cannot be calculated or may be inaccurate.

MEMBER STATES	Total SPA sites	Terrestrial SPA Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	No. Marine SPA	Marine SPA area (km <sup>2</sup> )
BELGIË/BELGIQUE	234	2,967	4	315
BULGARIA	114	22,678	14	539
ČESKÁ REPUBLIKA	41	7,034	0	0
DANMARK	113	2,538	59	12,180
DEUTSCHLAND	738	43,763	15	16,149
EESTI**	66	6,160	**	6,497
ÉIRE/IRELAND	162	3,955	86	1,276
ELLÁDA**	202	27,592	**	1,909
ESPAÑA	593	103,539	31	1,009
FRANCE	384	43,567	73	34,918
ITALIA	600	41,067	45	2,724
KÝPROS*	29	1,484	3	109
LATVIJA	95	6,479	4	520
LIETUVA**	85	5,482	**	423
LUXEMBOURG	12	139	0	0
MAGYARORSZÁG	56	13,458	0	0
MALTA	13	16	0	0
NEDERLAND	78	5,235	6	4,895
ÖSTERREICH	97	9,869	0	0
POLSKA	142	48,841	4	6,463
PORTUGAL	59	9,816	10	622
ROMÂNIA**	108	28,384	**	1,467
SLOVENIJA	27	4,653	1	3
SLOVENSKO	38	12,236	0	0
SUOMI	468	25,271	66	5,567
SVERIGE	531	25,837	108	4,016
UNITED KINGDOM	262	15,279	37	8,619
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,347</b>	<b>517,340</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>110,220</b>



Explore the Natura 2000 sites on the GIS Natura 2000 viewer

<http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu>



**SITES OF COMMUNITY IMPORTANCE (SCIs)**  
Habitats Directive

**NATURA 2000 SITES**  
(SPAs + SCIs)

Total SCI sites	Terrestrial SCI Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	No. Marine SCI	Marine SCI area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Total Natura 2000 sites	Total Natura 2000 Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Terrestrial Natura 2000 Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	% of National Area	Marine Natura 2000 area (km <sup>2</sup> )	MEMBER STATES
280	3,071	2	1,029	458	5,136	3,870	12.7%	1,266	BELGIUM
228	32,838	14	592	332	38,606	37,634	33.9%	972	BULGARIA
1,084	7,867	0	0	1,125	11,072	11,072	14.0%	0	CZECH REPUBLIC
261	3,174	125	16,145	350	22,390	3,849	8.9%	18,541	DENMARK
4,621	34,655	53	19,768	5,266	80,729	55,061	15.4%	25,668	GERMANY
531	7,623	**	3,753	561	14,663	8,037	17.8%	6,626	ESTONIA**
426	7,553	98	6,017	583	15,885	9,122	13.0%	6,763	IRELAND
241	21,467	**	6,573	419	42,955	35,804	27.1%	7,151	GREECE**
1,458	123,444	95	7,900	1,787	147,591	137,317	27.2%	10,275	SPAIN
1,368	46,778	134	27,521	1,752	110,088	68,790	12.5%	41,298	FRANCE
2,269	43,335	165	2,781	2,549	62,623	57,736	19.2%	4,886	ITALY
40	754	6	129	61	1,760	1,627	28.4%	132	CYPRUS*
324	7,294	6	562	325	7,865	7,305	11.3%	560	LATVIA
403	6,100	**	540	488	8,565	7,879	12.1%	686	LITHUANIA**
48	414	0	0	60	471	471	18.1%	0	LUXEMBOURG
477	14,432	0	0	523	19,939	19,939	21.4%	0	HUNGARY
28	42	1	8	35	50	41	13.0%	9	MALTA
144	3,483	14	11,397	215	17,506	5,725	13.8%	11,781	THE NETHERLANDS
170	8,988	0	0	220	12,324	12,324	14.7%	0	AUSTRIA
823	34,321	6	3,599	958	68,043	60,782	19.4%	7,261	POLAND
96	16,013	25	775	147	20,951	19,202	20.9%	1,748	PORTUGAL
298	31,476	**	1,353	381	44,227	42,654	17.9%	1,573	ROMANIA**
259	6,360	3	0	286	7,205	7,203	35.5%	2	SLOVENIA
382	5,739	0	0	420	14,141	14,141	29.0%	0	SLOVAKIA
1,715	43,092	98	5,460	1,833	55,672	48,758	14.4%	6,914	FINLAND
3,984	56,917	334	7,508	4,074	64,978	57,124	13.8%	7,854	SWEDEN
636	16,657	62	26,322	898	54,474	17,683	7.2%	36,791	UNITED KINGDOM
22,594	583,888	1,247	149,732	26,106	949,910	751,150	17.5%	198,760	TOTAL



© LIFE03\_MAT\_FIN\_000039

Major Natura 2000 wetlands in the Gulf of Finland have been actively managed and restored with the help of LIFE funds for the benefit of rare and endangered migratory birds

**Member States have six years in which to designate an SCI as an SAC and apply the necessary conservation measures**

## Designating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

As the establishment phase for Natura 2000 is now at an advanced stage the focus is increasingly shifting to the effective management and restoration of the sites in the network. The requirement to apply the necessary conservation measures is formally triggered by the designation of the sites as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Member States must designate SACs within six years of the sites being adopted by the Commission as Sites of Community Importance (SCIs).

But what does SAC designation mean in practice and what impact should it have on the protection and management of the sites themselves? The present article

aims to clarify some of the principles behind this obligation.

### SCIs are adopted, what happens now?

Over the past decade huge efforts have been made across all 27 EU countries to select the most suitable areas for the conservation of Europe's rarest and most threatened habitat types and species which are protected under the two EU Nature Directives. The result is truly impressive: over 26,000 have been included in the Natura 2000 Network so far of which 22,000 have been identified as Sites of Community Importance, making it the largest coordinated network of protected areas anywhere in the world.

However, selecting and safeguarding SCIs is just the first step. The Habitats Directive also requires that positive conservation measures are taken to ensure that those species and habitat types deemed of EU importance and listed in Annex I and II of the Directive are maintained or restored to a favourable conservation status across their natural range within the EU (ie are thriving and in a healthy condition).

The Natura 2000 Network will have an essential role to play in helping to achieve this objective since it protects their most important habitats. Whereas some sites will not require active management, for many it will not be enough to



simply prevent further damage or deterioration. In such cases, active conservation or even restoration measures will also be needed to enable the species and habitat types for which the site has been designated to recover and reach a stable condition.

The type of conservation measures and management effort to be applied will, of course, vary from one site to another depending on the species and habitat types for which it is designated, their conservation status and their particular management requirements.

But if positive measures are undertaken in the different Natura 2000 sites, as appropriate, the likelihood of the protected species and habitat types reaching an overall favourable conservation status in the EU will be much greater than if only passive management or ad hoc, piecemeal measures are applied here and there, without paying heed to the overall objectives of the Habitats Directive.

The importance of implementing positive conservation measures is further underlined by the fact

### Article 6.1 of the Habitats Directive:

*For special areas of conservation, Member States shall establish the necessary conservation measures, involving, if need be, appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans and appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual measures which correspond to the ecological requirements of the natural habitat types in Annex I and the species in Annex II present on the site.*

management measures under Article 6.1. Before then the sites will already be subjected to protective safeguards which aim to prevent their deterioration (Article 6.2) as well as the authorisation procedure for new plans or projects likely to have a significant effect on the site (Article 6.3 and 6.4).

Member States are given up to six years in which to designate an SCI as an SAC. The Directive recognises that it takes time to identify the appropriate management measures to be applied to particular sites and to agree with the different land managers and stakeholders concerned how to implement these on the ground. Member States should not wait for the six year period to expire before setting out to identify and establish the necessary conservation measures. This process should normally begin

as soon as the site has been adopted as an SCI.

### Timeframe SAC designation

Considering that the first SCIs were approved through a Commission Decision on the 28th December 2001 and that the majority of the SCIs were approved by the end of 2007, the deadline for SAC designation is increasingly imminent and has in some cases already expired (see graph 1).

Several Member States have already designated all or part of their SCIs as SACs, but there are also a significant number of SCIs

for which SAC designation is becoming overdue. The next few years will therefore be crucial in this respect, especially as it marks the beginning of the effective and positive management of the Natura 2000 Network.

Any delays at this stage in the designation of SACs and in putting in place the necessary measures could not only have serious repercussions for the conservation status of the already endangered species and habitat types listed in the Habitats Directive but would also undermine the EU's ability to deliver on the new EU Biodiversity Strategy (especially targets 1 and 3, see previous article).

The six-year deadline starts from the moment the site is first included in the Commission Decision for the SCIs. If later on, subsequent decisions adjust some of the details of the site this does not mean that the SAC

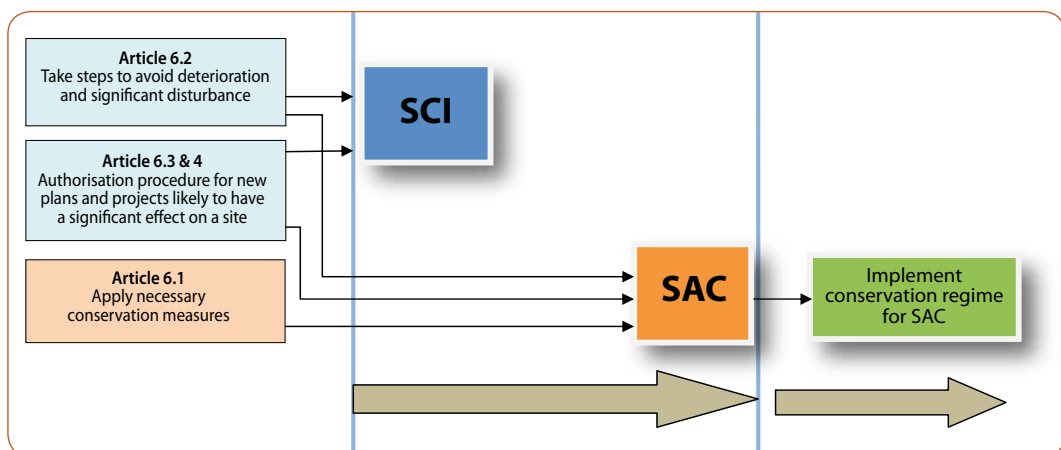
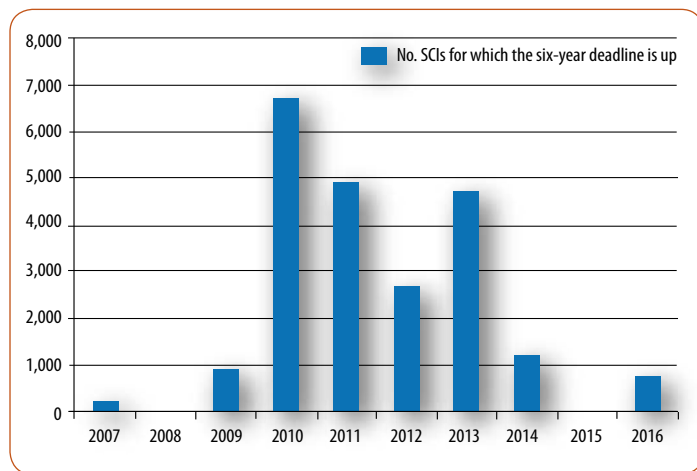
### Definition of a Special Area of Conservation

*"a Site of Community importance designated by the Member States through a statutory, administrative and/or contractual act where the necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the natural habitats and/or the populations of the species for which the site is designated". (Article 1.I of the Habitats Directive)*

that very few of the species and habitat types are currently in favourable conservation status (according to a health check published in 2009). The challenge that lies ahead is therefore considerable and should not be under-estimated.

### Purpose of SAC designation

The designation of SACs plays a crucial role in this process since it formally triggers the implementation of positive





Dry grasslands are among the most species-rich habitats in Europe but they require active management. A LIFE project in the Saarland, Germany restored 14 residual dry grasslands so that they could be managed once again for the benefit of wildlife using EU agri-environmental schemes

designation can be postponed. These adjustments will however need to be incorporated into the SAC designation process and taken into account when establishing the necessary conservation measures.

Article 4.4. of the Habitats Directive also provides an opportunity to Member States, when designating a site as an SAC, to establish priorities in the light of the importance of the sites for the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of the habitat types and species and for the overall coherence of Natura 2000, and in the light of

the threats of degradation or destruction to which those sites are exposed.

### The procedure for SAC designation

The Directive does not set out any particular procedure for the designation of SACs. This issue is a matter for the domestic law of the Member States, which enjoy a broad discretion in determining the manner in which they designate the SCI to SAC.

Member States have the flexibility to introduce new designation procedures or adapt existing ones and/or underpin the designation by

other legal acts. They also have a choice in the type of legal act they use – whether it is statutory, contractual or administrative – and can decide at which administrative level (e.g. national or regional) it is most appropriate to designate SACs. It is also up to Member States to determine whether the designation act is done for

one site at a time or whether it covers multiple sites.

However, whatever procedure is used, Member States should ensure the unquestionable binding force of that designation. The designation act itself must also provide sufficient clarity to satisfy the requirements of the Directive with legal certainty.

### Unquestionable binding force

An important judgement of the Court of Justice in relation to the designation of sites under the Birds Directive (Commission/ Belgium C-415/01) states that “the provisions of directives must be implemented with unquestionable binding force, and the specificity, precision and clarity necessary to satisfy the requirements of legal certainty. The principle of legal certainty requires appropriate publicity for the national measures adopted pursuant to Community rules in such a way as to enable the persons concerned by such measures to ascertain the scope of their rights and obligations in the particular area governed by Community law”.



Blocking ditches in order to restore the rich mosaic of rare Natura 2000 habitat types, including wet heaths and sand dunes, in Kalmthoutse Heide, Belgium



## Legal provisions applying to SACs

In order to provide the necessary legal clarity, the SAC designation act must, in addition to providing the name and location of the site, be clear and legally transparent about:

**Species and habitat types for which SAC is designated:** for instance, by listing – either in the act itself or by cross referencing to a separate legally binding document – the different species of Annex II and habitat types of Annex I significantly present in each site (a key source of information for this is the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form that has been compiled by Member States for each site).

**SAC boundaries:** by including a map or maps – either in the act itself or in a separate statutory, administrative and/or contractual act (such as a public register) with binding force – showing the precise boundary of the site(s). The map should be in accordance with the relevant national/regional cartographic systems and at a suitable scale to allow all interested and affected parties to be able to determine the spatial location of the site in relation to land holdings.

The boundaries must not differ from those of the Site of Community Importance (SCI) established for this area unless the borders of an SCI have already been amended

following the established procedure and subject to an updated Commission Decision.

### Legal provisions applying to SACs:

The SAC designation should make clear the obligation to apply the necessary conservation measures on the SAC which correspond to the ecological requirements of the natural habitat types in Annex I and the species in Annex II present on the site (in accordance with Article 6.1 of the Habitats Directive). In most cases it would not be appropriate to include a description of these conservation measures in the legal designation act itself since they may require regular adjustments and it should be possible to do this without having to go through the onerous task of adjusting a legal act every time. But there must nevertheless be a legal mechanism in place to ensure that the necessary conservation measures are established and implemented on each site.

Member States have a choice of approaches that may be used in relation to applying the necessary conservation measures. This includes the development of Natura 2000 site management plans specifically designed for the sites or the integration of Natura 2000 measures into other sector plans and programmes as well as the use of appropriate statutory, administrative or

## Adopting an inclusive approach through Natura 2000 management plans

Natura 2000 management plans are often used to develop a consensus view on how best to manage a Natura 2000 site in light of the differing landuses and socio-economic interests. Although not obligatory Natura 2000 management plans are an excellent way to:

- identify the conservation objectives of the site so that it is clear to all what is being conserved and why;
- analyse the socio-economic and cultural context of the area and the interactions between different landuses and the EU protected species and habitats present;
- provide an open forum for debate amongst all interest groups on how best to manage the site in light of the local socio-economic context and regional characteristics;
- identify specific conservation measures to be taken in order to secure the conservation objectives of the site, as well as determine who will be responsible for implementing them;
- help find practical management solutions that are well integrated into other landuse practices;
- establish the funding required for implementing these conservation measures and the different sources that can be used for investing in Natura 2000.

contractual measures. The Commission strongly encourages the use of management plans as a transparent tool to assist the management of Natura 2000 sites.

It should also be clear that the protection and procedural safeguards for Natura 2000 sites of the Habitats Directive apply de facto to SACs as well as SCIs – for instance by making a cross reference in the designation act to the relevant articles in the law transposing the Habitats Directive or to a legal act that has been established earlier to give protection to the SCIs.

## Concluding remarks

The designation of SACs is a key milestone in the establishment of Natura 2000. The six-year time-frame to achieve this is now overdue or increasingly imminent for many SCIs. Despite important progress in some countries this still represents an important challenge in many Member States. Ensuring this legal underpinning for Natura 2000 will provide a more secure basis for the future management of the network and the strategic role it has to play in meeting the 2020 target of halting and reversing biodiversity loss in the EU.

## Applicability to SPAs

In accordance with Article 3.1 of the Habitats Directive, Special Protection Areas designated under the Birds Directive form part of the Natura 2000 Network. Articles 6(2), (3) and (4) therefore also apply to Special Protection Areas (according to Article 7 of the Habitats Directive).

On the other hand, the provisions of Article 6(1) do not apply to SPAs. However, analogous provisions apply to SPAs by virtue of Article 4(1) and (2) of the Birds Directive. i.e. Member States have to ensure that the species mentioned in Annex I and regularly occurring migratory bird species are subject of special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution.



Red-breasted goose *Branta ruficollis* – a highly endangered species protected under the Birds Directive. Up to ninety percent of these birds now winter at just a handful of roost sites along the Black Sea in Bulgaria and Romania – all are in the Natura 2000 Network

# natura news



Commissioner Potočnik and site managers meet the European press to discuss the importance of investing in Natura 2000

## Commissioner's round table on investing in Natura 2000

On the 16th May, Commissioner Potočnik organised a high profile round table with the European media in order to draw attention to the importance of investing in Natura 2000 over the coming decade. Journalists heard first hand from a range of key site managers about how Natura 2000 works in practice for the benefit of both nature and people.

The round table provided an opportunity to discuss options for the future financing of the Network. The Commissioner stressed that, whilst the costs of effectively managing the Natura 2000 Network are significant (estimated at €5.8 billion/year), this is a small price to pay for all that we are offered in return. Investing in Natura 2000 is not just important for biodiversity; it also makes economic sense and presents good value for money. He highlighted the fact that there is increasing evidence

to show that its benefits often outweigh its costs, not just because of the many public goods and services it provides but also in terms of local income and employment opportunities. This should be better recognised and factored into the relevant EU policy areas so that those who help to maintain Europe's natural capital and the many services it provides can be rewarded for their work.

The event also marked the launch of a new Commission brochure on 'Investing in Natura 2000: for people and nature' which is available from:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/index\\_en.htm#guidancehandbook](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/financing/index_en.htm#guidancehandbook)



## New Standard Data Form updated

After extensive discussions over three years, the revision of the Standard Data Form (SDF) that is used to record and transmit data to the Commission on individual Natura 2000 sites has been approved by the Habitats Committee in May 2011. The revision takes account of the enormous progress made in information and communication technology since the form was first approved in 1997. The new format is simpler and has been re-designed to make the handling of data easier.

Member States now have until September 2012 to transfer the data from the old to the new format for all their sites (new sites must be submitted directly on the new forms). The occasion should also be used to fill any missing data and update existing information where this is readily available. Considering the importance of these Standard Data Forms, the Commission will ensure that they are kept regularly updated in the future as well, especially in function of latest scientific knowledge.

The new SDF will now be translated and published as a Commission Implementing Decision during the summer.

## New Reporting Guidelines under the Nature Directives

The next national reports on the progress made in the implementation of the Habitats Directive during the period 2007–2012 will need to be submitted to the Commission by June 2013. In order to ensure that the data and conservation assessments are analysed and

collected in a standardised way in all countries, the Commission has prepared a revised reporting format and accompanying guidelines in close collaboration with Member States.

These so-called Article 17 reports need to provide detailed assessments of the conservation status of the protected species and habitat types found in each country so that the information can be aggregated to give an overview of their conservation state across the EU and within each biogeographical region. The reports are a vital source of information on the health of EU's most vulnerable habitat types and species and are used not just to gauge in how far the Habitats Directive has reached its objectives but also whether the EU is meeting its targets under the new EU Biodiversity Strategy.

The Commission has undergone a similar exercise for reporting under Article 12 of the Birds Directive in order to be able to provide, for the first time, an assessment of the state of Europe's birds. The deadlines for the Article 12 reports has also been synchronised with that of the Article 17 reports under the Habitats Directive.

Reporting Formats and guidelines are available on the CIRCA-Reporting site : <http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/monnat/library?!=/&vm=detailed&sb=Title>

## Call for proposals for BEST projects

BEST is a small EU financing programme (€ 2 million) created to support projects that promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the



- NEWS
- PUBLICATIONS
- EVENTS

EU's Outermost Regions and European Overseas Countries and Territories. The first call for proposals is now open and applicants have until 9 September 2011 to submit their project proposals

Full details including the grant application forms and eligibility criteria, are available on [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ngos/finansup\\_11\\_best.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ngos/finansup_11_best.htm)

## New Natura 2000 seminars underway

The Commission is launching a new process at a biogeographical level to accompany the Member States' operational implementation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Working in close collaboration with Member States, key experts, user groups, and NGOs, the initiative is intended as a mechanism to facilitate discussion between all actors on the measures needed to achieve the favourable conservation status of species and habitat types of Community interest, paying special attention to the management and coherence of the Natura 2000 Network.

While the responsibility for achieving favourable conservation status lies with the Member States, the Commission considers that the management of the Natura 2000 Network would benefit considerably from co-ordinated or collaborative approaches among Member States sharing a common biogeographical context. In light of this, it intends to organise a series of biogeographical seminars to exchange information on conservation objectives and measures for particular species



*Ancient riparian forest, Latvia – an important habitat type in the Boreal Region*

and habitats, draw up good practices in management/restoration and monitoring techniques as well as strengthen cross-border cooperation where possible. A first pilot biogeographical seminar, focusing on the Boreal Region, will be held in May/June next year. Further details will be provided in subsequent issues of this newsletter.

## New sites included in the Natura 2000 Network

In January 2011, the Natura 2000 Network was further expanded by nearly 27,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The latest update concerns 15 Member States and increases the number of Natura 2000 sites by 739. The recent additions cover six biogeographical regions – the Alpine, Atlantic, Boreal, Continental, Mediterranean and Pannonian regions. They include 459 new sites in Poland targeting major freshwater lakes and river systems in particular and a further 229 sites for the Czech Republic. More than half of the area added is made up of marine sites mainly in France, Spain and Denmark which has included nine new sites for the harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*.

## A new review of the implementation of the EU bird Species Action Plans

In April this year, BirdLife completed a review for DG Environment of the implementation of 23 of the 54 EU Bird Species Action Plans (SAPs) currently in place for threatened species and subspecies listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. The review focuses on the latest SAPs to have been written or updated for the Commission in the last four years. It examines the extent to which they have been implemented and whether their recovery targets have been reached.

The report concludes that the highest levels of implementation have been achieved in species which occur in only a few countries and that are well protected within SPAs (e.g. Fea's and Zino's petrels, Dalmatian pelican). On the contrary, implementation has been weakest for species that are dispersed over large areas (e.g. lesser-spotted eagle, lesser kestrel) and whose conservation requires that measures go beyond classic conservation approaches, such as designating and managing protected areas.

The overall conclusions are nevertheless generally encouraging, especially where LIFE+ projects are involved. Even though only nine of the 23



*Harbour porpoise, *Phocoena phocoena* receives increased protection within the Natura 2000 Network*



© J. Hasek

Fifteen LIFE-Nature projects have been funded since 1992 for the conservation of the wolf *Canis lupus*

SAPs have reached their long or medium targets so far, nine species have clearly improved their population trend since the development of the SAP. The decline of a further four species has been halted, while populations for five others have remained stable or have levelled off. However, two species continue to show declining populations (little bustard and Balearic shearwater) despite having Species Action Plans. This is most likely due to the poor integration of their conservation needs into wider land and marine management policies. For nine other species, the assessment shows no clear results, possibly because their action plans were only recently drawn up.

Further details available from: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/action\\_plans/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/action_plans/index_en.htm)

### New guidance document on estuaries

Continuing in its series of sector-specific guidance documents, the Commission has published a new guide on the implementation of the

Birds and Habitats Directives in estuaries and coastal zones, paying particular attention to port development and dredging. This was followed up with a Commission Staff Working Document on integrating biodiversity into port development. Recognising the achievements of the port and dredging sectors in integrating biodiversity and nature protection into their activities, this second document encourages 'working with nature' in order to preserve biodiversity in coastal zones in Europe. The guidance document will be available in most EU languages.

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/guidance_en.htm)

### LIFE and European Mammals

A new LIFE Focus publication draws attention to a number of exemplary projects targeting marine, freshwater or terrestrial mammal species in the EU. From the European bison and the monk seal to small rodents, LIFE has assisted in the conservation of more than 25 mammal

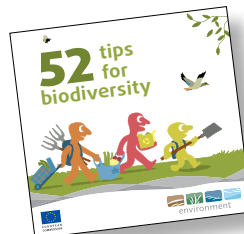
species protected under the Habitats Directive since 1992. Almost half of the projects have focused on brown bear and wolf – highlighting the importance of actions to conserve large carnivores in Europe.

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/lifefocus/nat.htm#mammals>

### 52 Tips for Biodiversity

The Commission has published a handy little guide for the general public on what they can do to help conserve biodiversity. The guide offers 52 practical tips – one for each week of the year – which individuals can apply in their everyday lives in order to help make a difference. The guide will be available in all EU languages.

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/brochures/biodiversity\\_tips/en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/brochures/biodiversity_tips/en.pdf)



## natura 2000

The Natura 2000 Newsletter is produced by DG Environment, European Commission

### Author

Kerstin Sundseth  
Ecosystems LTD, Brussels

### Commission Editor

Susanne Wegefelt  
DG Environment

### Design

NatureBureau, UK

The newsletter is produced twice a year and is available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Polish. To be added to the mailing list, or to download the electronic version, visit [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs:natura2000nl\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs:natura2000nl_en.htm)

The newsletter does not necessarily reflect the official view of the European Commission. Reproduction is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged

Printed on recycled paper that has been awarded the EU Ecolabel (<http://ec.europa.eu/ecolabel>)



EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

