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Commission

PRESENTATION OF THE AWARD FINALISTS



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NATURA 2000



Environment



PRESENTATION OF THE AWARD FINALISTS





Foreword

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I am delighted to present the 27 finalists for the 2020 European Natura 2000 Award. This year we received 79 eligible applications for our Award scheme, and the quality, range and variety of these applications has been truly inspiring. Across the EU, thousands of organisations and individuals work extremely hard to protect and manage our natural heritage and biodiversity, and the restoration and conservation of the most valuable ecosystems present in Natura 2000 sites.

As the largest coordinated network of conservation areas anywhere in the world, Natura 2000 is widely recognised as unique, and has been made possible through the cooperation between the 27 EU Member States. Natura 2000 is of increasing importance for Europeans, with 90% seriously concerned about the decline of natural habitats and the increase in the number of animals and plants facing extinction. In the EU, an estimated 4.4 million jobs depend directly on healthy ecosystems – an increasing number of those jobs are in Natura 2000 sites.

Natura 2000 recognises that people should not, in principle, be excluded from protected sites but should be encouraged to help manage them. Applications for the 2020 Natura 2000 Award have been received from a wide range of Europeans: farmers, environmental organisations, companies, authorities, hunters, academics, schoolchildren, fishermen and more. Through these efforts to support nature protection and restoration, it is clear that Europeans recognise the fundamental importance of nature as our life support system, as well as our joint European cultural heritage.

The Natura 2000 Award plays a key role in increasing the visibility of the Natura 2000 network. It contributes notably to the European Green Deal by rewarding actions tackling the climate and biodiversity crises.

The management of the Natura 2000 network contributes to the ambitious targets of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, to ensure that biodiversity in the EU will be on the path to recovery by 2030. The strategy includes a new Governance Framework for Biodiversity which will give fresh impetus to stakeholders' engagement. In the COVID-19 context, the strategy aims to build our societies' resilience to future threats such as the impacts of climate change, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks, including by protecting wildlife and fighting illegal wildlife trade.

On behalf of the European Commission, I warmly congratulate the finalists of the 2020 edition of the Natura 2000 Award along with all participants for their tireless efforts to protect our biodiversity. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Jury members who selected the five category winners and the general public who participated in the public vote to select the Natura 2000 European Citizens' Award. Your engagement helps to raise awareness and understanding of the benefits and importance of nature and biodiversity.

We need to continue and increase these efforts in order to keep our natural heritage and ensure that future generations can enjoy the wonders of European nature celebrated within these pages. I hope that the initiatives presented here will act as inspiration and will help us all to support nature in protecting us!

Virginijus Sinkevičius
European Commissioner for Environment,
Oceans and Fisheries

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Ungem Vekha'.

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The European Natura 2000 Award

What is Natura 2000?

Despite its small size, Europe contains an amazing diversity of wild plants, animals and landscapes, many of which are not found anywhere else in the world. Our biodiversity, however, is in trouble. Across the continent, the number of species and natural habitats is declining at an alarming rate.

Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of the EU's biodiversity policy. It is an EU-wide network of almost 27 000 terrestrial and marine sites, covering more than 18% of land areas and about 9% of the surrounding seas, and was established by two pioneering pieces of EU legislation - the 1979 Birds Directive and the 1992 Habitats Directive. The aim of the network is to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

The economic benefits of the network have been estimated in the range of € 200 to 300 billion per year.

The European Natura 2000 Award



© adeiphi

The European Commission launched the European Natura 2000 Award to reward excellence in the management of Natura 2000 sites and to give the organisations and people involved the recognition they deserve. The Award is a means to raise awareness of Natura 2000 by showcasing the network, how it works and how it preserves Europe's biodiversity.

In the five editions to date, over 500 applications have been received in all. These have covered a wide range of activities, including: the conservation of particular threatened species and habitats; ways to engage stakeholders in conservation; reconciling conflicting interests so that stakeholders can more easily cooperate to achieve the aims of the network; and providing socio-economic benefits to local communities.

Applications have been received from a variety of organisations and individuals including managing authorities, conservation organisations, businesses and individuals.

The five Award categories for 2020 are Conservation, Socio-Economic Benefits, Communication, Reconciling Interests/Perceptions, and Cross-Border Cooperation and Networking. In addition to prizes for these categories, the European Citizens' Award allows the public to directly engage in the Award process. All finalist applications from the five categories are eligible for the Citizens' Award, which is given to the application with the most public votes. In 2015, 2016 and 2018, over 100,000 votes were cast in all. This year we have received almost 45 000 votes.

2020 Natura 2000 Award applications

In 2020... there were
79 applications from
26 Member States
and the United Kingdom

 **27 finalists
were selected**





- Orange square: Birds Directive sites (SPA)
- Blue square: Habitats Directive sites pSCI, SCI, SAC
- Green square: Sites – or parts of sites – belonging to both Directives

Selecting the finalists and winners

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

The Jury for 2020 is presented below.



© European Commission, 2020

Florika Fink-Hooijer

Dr. Florika Fink-Hooijer is the Director-General of the Environment Department of the European Commission (DG ENV).

Having occupied various senior management positions in the European Commission, Florika Fink-Hooijer is recognised for her strong management and leadership skills and her in-depth experience in EU policy making and shaping. A lawyer by training, she brings a proven record of accomplishment in foreign external policy and security matters, as well as in disaster risk reduction, and justice and home affairs. She also has extensive experience in leading complex inter-institutional and intergovernmental negotiations. In each of her assignments at senior level, she has helped to instil a culture of transparency and accountability and steered transformational processes.



© European Parliament

Pascal Canfin

Pascal Canfin is a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for the Liste Renaissance, which is part of the Renew Europe group.

Mr. Canfin was elected to the European Parliament in 2009 and May 2019 and has been appointed chair of the committee on the environment, public health and food safety (ENVI). Prior to that position, Mr. Canfin was director general of WWF France from 2016 to 2019 where he contributed to the safeguarding of species and their ecosystems, the fight against global warming and advocated for a more respectful energy transition. From 2014 to 2015, he was senior advisor for climate at the World Resources Institute (WRI) and co-chaired the Commission for Innovative Financing for Climate. In 2012, Pascal Canfin was appointed by French President Hollande minister delegate for development at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after having served as MEP from 2009 to 2012. He graduated in political science from the Bordeaux Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) and from Newcastle University.



Roby Biwer

Roby Biwer is a member of the Municipal Council of Bettembourg in Luxembourg and has been member of the Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) since 2014, and Vice-chair in the last term.

Mr. Biwer was rapporteur for the CoR opinion on the fitness-check of the Nature Directives, and for other opinions on forests and biodiversity. He is currently the rapporteur for the new opinion on "Bio-diverse cities and regions beyond 2020 at the UN CBD COP 15 and in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030".

Since 2000, he has been president of SICONA, a politically based inter-municipality group of 21 municipalities which is engaged in synergies to protect and improve natural habitats and biodiversity as well as helping national government in implementing the Birds and Habitats Directives.

Mr. Biwer has also been member of board of a local section of "natur&ëmwelt" (nature and environment), the largest association for protection of biodiversity and environment in Luxembourg, since 1981. Since 2014, he has been the "natur&ëmwelt" national president. Previously, in 1994 he started his political engagement as member of the Municipality Council of Bettembourg and was elected Mayor of the Municipality of Bettembourg from 2004 to 2011.



Jurgen Tack

Dr. Jurgen Tack has been Scientific Director at the European Landowners' Organization (ELO), CEO at Landelijk Vlaanderen (Flemish Landowners' Organisation), and CEO of the Aanspreekpunt Privaat Beheer Natuur en Bos (an advisory organ for private landowners on the management of nature and forest) since 2016.

Jurgen Tack studied biology (marine ecology) at Brussels Free University where he also obtained his PhD in Sciences. Within the framework of the Kenya Belgium Project in Marine Sciences (Coastal Farms Kenya), he developed a number of oyster farms along the Kenyan coast. In 2000, he joined the Belgian Biodiversity Platform team (Belgian Science Policy Office) where he was responsible for European and international science policy in the field of biodiversity and biodiversity related research. In 2007, he became the CEO of the Research Institute for Nature and Forest (a research organisation under the umbrella of the Flemish Authority). He coordinates the LIFE+ project 'Land Is For Ever', a project dedicated to private land conservation by individual private landowners. On behalf of ELO, he chairs the European Commission's Large Carnivore Platform.



Agata Szafraniuk

Agata Szafraniuk represents the European Habitat Forum, an assembly of leading European nature conservation organisations, which provide advice on the implementation and future development of EU biodiversity policy, including improving integration into sectoral policies.

Ms. Szafraniuk is a Wildlife Lead for Central and Eastern Europe at ClientEarth, an environmental law charity which use the power of law to bring about end-to-end systemic change. Ms Szafraniuk is a senior lawyer, and, in her role, she oversees and manages wide-range issues related to legal aspects of nature conservation in Central and Eastern Europe. Ms Szafraniuk holds a master's degree in law from Warsaw University and is a qualified as advocate (adwokat) in Poland.

Conservation

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



Lille Vildmose: a bog restoration project for the public and peatlands

DENMARK

© Lille Vildmose, a bog restoration project for the public and peatlands



The Natura 2000 area in Lille Vildmose hosts one of the largest lowland raised bogs in north-western Europe. However, during the past 250 years, the central part of the site has been comprehensively exploited. As a result, less than half of the original bog remains today and much of this is invaded by trees and shrubs.

With the support of EU LIFE funds, the state authority Naturstyrelsen launched a major restoration programme to protect the remaining bog from further degradation and restore an optimal hydrology in the central zone. This

involved a wide range of activities including dam building, tree clearance, reintroduction of grazing, and removal of invasive alien species. Two observation platforms, a boardwalk and eight new information boards were also installed for the public to explore and learn more about the Natura 2000 site. Conservation activities are proving very effective. Recent monitoring has shown a clear improvement in the conservation status of the restored raised bog areas.

Natura 2000 sites: Lille Vildmose, Tofte Skov og Høstemark Skov and Lille Vildmose, Denmark

Applicants: Naturstyrelsen; Aage V. Jensen Naturfond; Aalborg Kommune

<https://naturstyrelsen.dk/naturbeskyttelse/naturprojekter/life-lille-vildmose/>

pehan@nst.dk

Landscape connectivity for brown bears and wolves – a regional network of Natura sites

UNITED KINGDOM AND ROMANIA

© Landscape connectivity for brown bears and wolves - a regional network of Natura sites



The Apuseni-Southern Carpathian corridor is a 150 km long ecological corridor comprised of 17 Natura 2000 sites. It remains the only route through which bears, wolves and other wildlife can move between the Western and Southern Carpathians. To prevent further fragmentation of the remaining wolf and bear populations, a major conservation project was launched to restore key habitats and address human wildlife conflicts. The actions undertaken included

the purchase and restoration of 133 ha of land within a Natura 2000 site. Fences were erected, dogs bought to guard livestock, and a dedicated Intervention Team was created - made up of rangers, a vet and the police - to support carnivore-related compensation claims. In addition, over 2 600 people from across 260 organisations participated in workshops, training courses and public events about the project, the corridor and large carnivores. Thanks to the LIFE-funded project, local attitudes towards large carnivores are increasingly positive.

17 Natura 2000 sites in Romania

Applicant: Fauna & Flora International

<http://connectcarpathians.ro>

paul.hotham@fauna-flora.org

Sustainable management of the farmed habitats of the Aran Islands

IRELAND

© Sustainable management of the farmed habitats of the Aran Islands



The remote Aran Islands are situated off the west coast of Ireland. They are protected in their entirety by Natura 2000 because of their rich and unique biodiversity. Much of this is the result of centuries of low-intensity farming, which is now in decline. Two LIFE-funded projects have been undertaken to support local farmers. The first - AranLIFE (2014 to 2018) - aimed to demonstrate best management techniques to maintain and restore sites by facilitating

optimum grazing, improving access to land parcels, clearing scrub, and providing better access to water for livestock. The conservation status of 1 011 ha of priority habitats was considerably improved thanks to these activities.

The follow up project - Caomhnú Árann - increases the number of farmers involved from 67 to 127 and targets an additional 500 ha of designated habitat. The new project is also trialling a new result-based agri-environment programme to ensure the long-term future of farming on the Aran Islands.

Natura 2000 sites: Inishmore Island SAC, Inishmaan Island SAC and Inisheer Island SAC, Ireland

Applicant: Caomhnú Árann

www.caomhnuaranneip.ie

caomhnuarann@gmail.com

Using underwater inventories for the conservation of marine areas in Finland

FINLAND

© Using underwater inventories for the conservation of marine areas in Finland



In 2004, the Finnish Inventory Programme for Underwater Marine Environment (VELMU) was established. Its aim is to develop a detailed picture of the distribution of marine habitats and species in Finnish marine waters, and to gain an insight into their conservation status. So far over 150 000 spatially explicit observations have been collected, making this the most all-encompassing national programme for marine areas in Europe. Field data have been combined with data on environmental variables and

human activities at sea to create a first, fully integrated map of marine nature values for Finland.

The VELMU data and spatial analyses have also been used to describe around 200 "EMMAS" - Ecologically Significant Marine Areas - in Finland's marine region and to designate further marine Natura 2000 sites. The study found that increasing the protected area coverage from 10% to just 11% would double the protection coverage of nature values.

Marine Natura 2000 sites in Finland including: Saaristomeri, Tulliniemen linnustonsuojelualue, Merikalla, Hangon itäinen selkä, Sandkallanin eteläpuolinen merialue and Luodematalat

Applicants: Ministry of the Environment; Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)

<https://www.ymparisto.fi/en-US/VELMU>

penina.blankett@ym.fi

From wastewater basins to nature reserve

SLOVENIA

© From wastewater basins to nature reserve



The Ormož Sugar Factory (TSO) was built in 1979. Soon after its construction, the factory's wastewater basins began to attract large numbers of water birds. The shallow, inundated areas and mudflats offered optimal feeding and resting sites for many species. In 2006, the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) hit the sugar sector and TSO was forced to close its factory. Thanks to past fruitful cooperation, TSO decided in 2010 to donate the approximate 60 ha of land

to DOPPS-Birdlife Slovenia. The latter successfully applied for LIFE funds to restore the site, install a new water supply system and establish a long-term conservation strategy for the area.

The site - which is now an integral part of the "Drava" Natura 2000 area - is now one of the most important stopover and breeding sites for water birds in Slovenia. Grazing has also helped establish one of the largest complexes of extensively managed grasslands in the Lower Podravje region.

Natura 2000 site: Drava, Slovenia

Applicant: Društvo za opazovanje in proučevanje ptic Slovenije (DOPPS) - BirdLife Slovenia

<http://livedrava.ptice.si>

damijan.denac@dopps.si

Water for Wetlands, Wetlands for Life

SLOVAKIA

© Water for Wetlands, Wetlands for Life



The Medzibodrožie region is an inland 'island' surrounded by a series of lowland rivers. It contains over 150 wetlands as well as floodplain forests, oxbow lakes, sand dunes and farmland. Now protected as a Natura 2000 site, it is one of most important bird sites in Slovakia. The populations of the bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) and the ferruginous duck (*Aythya nyroca*) here have always fluctuated in response to weather conditions but, over

time, the dry periods have grown longer, and the wetlands have become increasingly degraded through intensive human use and climate change.

This led Birdlife Slovakia to launch a LIFE project to restore the wetlands for the benefit of the two bird species. Carefully planned conservation actions were carried out to restore and manage 20 wetlands within the area. National Action Plans were also developed for both species. The project was a great success, and the site now hosts 80 - 100% of all bitterns and all ferruginous ducks in Slovakia.

Natura 2000 site: Medzibodrožie, Slovakia

Applicant: Slovenská ornitologická spoločnosť (SOS) - BirdLife Slovensko

<http://medzibodrozie.vtaky.sk/>

matejrepel@gmail.com

Restore the Berlengas Islands ecosystem to protect seabirds and native plants

PORTUGAL

© Restore the Berlengas Islands ecosystem to protect seabirds and native plants



Since 2014, a series of LIFE-funded conservation actions have restored the valuable habitats, endemic plants and seabird populations on the Berlengas Islands, Portugal, which form part of the Natura 2000 network. Despite their isolation, these islands are threatened by a number of factors, particularly invasive species. Measures were therefore taken to eradicate black rats and rabbits and control the yellow-legged gull population. Around 90% of

the area covered by the invasive hottentot fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*) was also manually cleared through volunteer work, enabling the expansion of rare native plants and habitats.

In addition, 160 artificial nests were built for Cory's shearwater (*Calonectris borealis*) and band-rumped storm-petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*), leading to an almost immediate increase in their breeding success. Finally, a visitor barometer was developed to monitor visitor numbers and inform those arriving of ongoing conservation efforts for the islands.

Natura 2000 site: Ilhas Berlengas, Portugal

Applicant: Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA) - BirdLife Portugal

<http://www.berlengas.eu>

joana.andrade@spea.pt

Magredi grasslands

ITALY

© Magredi grasslands



A LIFE project was launched to restore the last dry grasslands on the plains of Friuli, in northern Italy. Called "magredi", these unusual grasslands grow on coarse soils deposited by pre-alpine rivers. The abandonment of traditional farming practices, combined with a shift towards a more intensive production of soybean and maize, has caused their range to shrink dramatically over the years and what little remains is fast becoming overgrown with shrubs and invaded by non-native plant species.

Focusing on abandoned agricultural land within four Natura 2000 sites, measures were taken to clear large areas of scrub and remove the invasive plant species *Amorpha fruticosa* wherever possible. Mowing was re-introduced, wild grass seeds were sown, and rare native plant species were reintroduced to the area. The newly restored grasslands are now eligible for subsidies from the Rural Development Programme to ensure their continued management.

Natura 2000 sites: Magredi del Cellina, Greto del Tagliamento, Valle del Medio Tagliamento, Confluenza Fiumi Torre e Natisone and Magredi di Pordenone, Italy

Applicant: Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia Servizio Biodiversità

<https://www.magredinatura2000.it>

stefano.fabian@regione.fvg.it

Communication

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



Restoring active raised bogs in the Natura 2000 network

IRELAND



© The Living Bog

Active raised bogs once covered over 310 000 ha of the Irish midlands. Turf extraction and peat harvesting on an industrial scale has, however, stripped much of this away, with the result that only 1% of the original active raised bog remains. Fifty-three raised bog sites were designated as Natura 2000 sites in the late 1990s.

Through the EU LIFE Living Bog project, the Irish Government has begun restoring 12 of these raised

bogs across seven counties. It is the largest restoration effort of its kind to date and aims to improve 8000 ha of raised bog. As peat-cutting for fuel is very much part of Ireland's social history and traditions, the Living Bog project has engaged fully with local communities to secure their cooperation. Contacts were made with all those living and working around the targeted bogs, and an extensive programme of community events was launched, along with an intensive social media campaign. A major schools outreach project was also launched, involving over 200 schools.

12 Natura 2000 sites across seven counties, Ireland

Applicant: The Living Bog

<http://raisedbogs.ie>

ronan.casey@chg.gov.ie

Eau la la!!! Eco-tips for sea and shore!

FRANCE



© Eau la la!!! Eco-tips for sea and shore!

The coast of Armor (Brittany, France) stretches across 400 km, much of which is protected under the Natura 2000 network. In the summer of 2019, an environmental awareness campaign was launched for boaters, managers of port infrastructure, tourists and recreational anglers to encourage them to minimise their impact on the Natura 2000 sites. Six topics were chosen for the campaign: birdwatching and mammal-spotting, anti-fouling, black and grey water, waste management, mooring and seagrass beds, and recreational fishing.

With the help of the stakeholders themselves, the project developed information kits on the six topics, a booklet (also in English), a poster, a series of short videos and an informative website, and engaged two ambassadors to spread the message. The campaign has been very effective. Post-campaign surveys showed that 85% of the boaters involved were keen to improve their practices in relation to at least one of the six themes of the campaign. Because of the campaign's success, it was planned to repeat the campaign and the surveys in 2020.

Natura 2000 sites: Côte de Granit rose-Sept-Iles, Trégor-Goëlo and Rivière Léguer, forêts de Beffou, Coat an Noz et Coat an Hay, France

Applicants: Lannion-Trégor Communauté; Guingamp-Paimpol Agglomération; PETR du Pays de Guingamp

<https://protegeonslamer.bzh>

maiwenn.leborgne@lannion-tregor.com

Natura 2000 - bringing studies and people together for the benefit of nature

GERMANY

© Natura 2000 - bringing studies and people together for the benefit of nature



Over the last 17 years, the University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan-Triesdorf has been carrying out week-long student field projects to collect data and develop management and restoration proposals for species and habitats in the "Hochspessart" Natura 2000 site, a large beech forest in northern Bavaria.

The findings are presented to an assembly of local inhabitants, municipal authorities and elected officials. These meetings have proven very popular, attracting up

to 100 participants. As a result, the student projects have resulted in the construction or relocation of educational trails, the designation of strict forest reserves, the implementation of various conservation measures, and an improved uptake of funding options for Natura 2000 sites across the region. Overall, the initiative has contributed significantly to the knowledge and acceptance of Natura 2000 sites in Bavaria and has improved the image of Natura 2000 among local decision-makers and citizens.

Natura 2000 sites: Spessart and Hochspessart, Germany

Applicant: University of Applied Sciences Weihenstephan Triesdorf

<https://www.hswt.de>

volker.zahner@hswt.de

The world upside down: knowing and preserving bats

PORTUGAL

© The world upside down: knowing and preserving bats



The Alviela caves are located in a Natura 2000 site to the north of Lisbon and host an important number of rare bats. They are, however, subject to a high degree of anthropic pressure and other threats. This prompted the launch of a major awareness-raising campaign about the caves and their resident bats.

A fixed exhibition "Quiroptário" and a mobile exhibition for children were created, together with a "Bat Observatory"

with real-time video cameras to observe the bats close up. Two national student contests were organised for stop-motion videos, a website was set up, and an illustrated book, "Bat's Life", was produced and offered to 2000 children from elementary schools. Field trips for secondary school students were undertaken, and workshops were organised for teachers, tourism managers and employees of the National Network of Science Centres. The project has reached between 50000 and 100000 people, demonstrating the project's high degree of success.

Natura 2000 site: Serras de Aire e Candeeiros, Portugal

Applicant: Associação Centro Ciência Viva do Alviela - Carsoscópio

<https://www.conhecemosmorcegos.pt>

mjsilva@alviela.cienciaviva.pt

Aralar, the land where the world has a place

SPAIN



© Aralar, the land where the world has a place

"Aralar, the land where the world has a place" is an artistic film about the Aralar Natural Park in northern Spain produced by the small environmental group Landarlan. The film features many of the habitat types and species protected by the Natura 2000 site, such as the bearded vulture or red kite, and explains their

ecology and conservation threats. The aim is to raise awareness about the value, beauty and fragility of the area, and to bring society closer to nature and Natura 2000 protected areas.

Since its premiere in 2018, the film has been shown in more than 80 cities and has reached over 7 000 viewers. It has also been showcased at six film festivals and won two film awards (best screenplay at the Ukerdi Mountain Film Festival and best environment and mountain culture film award at the Mammoth Film Festival). The Basque public television has since acquired the rights to the film, which will ensure it reaches an even larger audience.

Natura 2000 sites: Sierra de Aralar and Oria Garaia / Alto Oria, Spain

Applicant: Landarlan Environmental Group

<http://www.aralardokumentala.eus/en/>

aralardokumentala@gmail.com

Socio-economic benefits

This Award recognises socio-economic benefits that have come about as a result of a Natura 2000 site or project.



New farming opportunities benefitting birds, people and climate

LITHUANIA

© New farming opportunities benefitting birds, people and climate



The globally threatened aquatic warbler has undergone a dramatic decline in Lithuania as a result of changing farming practices. To address this, the Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF) designed a special agri-environmental scheme under the EU Rural Development Programme to pay farmers to delay mowing and carry out other habitat management measures to the benefit of the warbler.

Initially designed under a LIFE project at a cost of € 30 000, this scheme has since engaged over 200 local farmers in the Nemunas Delta and surrounding areas, and has mobilised almost € 9 million in European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding for the conservation of the species. Another major success of the project has been the use of late-cut hay for animal bedding pellets - called Hygge pellets - which has created a new socio-economic activity based on the conservation of the aquatic warbler habitats.

Natura 2000 sites: Nemuno delta, Tyry pelkė and Žuvinto, Žaltyčio ir Amalvo pelkės, Lithuania

Applicant: Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania

<https://meldine.lt>

rita.griniene@bef.lt

Quinta do Pisão Nature Park

PORTUGAL

© Quinta do Pisão Nature Park



The organisation Cascais Ambiente implemented a landscape-scale conservation initiative in 380 ha of abandoned forest and agricultural land in the Sintre-Cascais Natura 2000 site. The project has restored and managed valuable habitats, created walking trails, introduced endangered livestock breeds, restored old farm buildings, and built a visitors' centre.

Over 250 outdoor, nature-based activities have also been developed and are on offer every year to visitors. They range from picking fruit and vegetables on a local farm to buying local handicrafts at the visitors' centre or participating in wildlife identification courses. The project actively engages the local community in all its activities and has also launched several initiatives with local disability and rehabilitation centres. Since the site was restored, the number of visitors has increased substantially: in 2019, some 110 000 people visited the area, up from 70 000 the previous year.

Natura 2000 site: Sintra / Cascais, Portugal

Applicant: Cascais Ambiente

<https://ambiente.cascais.pt/pt/quinta-do-pisao>

joao.melo@cascaisambiente.pt

LENA – Local Economy and Nature Conservation in the Danube region

BULGARIA, GERMANY, CROATIA, HUNGARY, ROMANIA AND SLOVENIA

© LENA – Local Economy and Nature Conservation in the Danube region



WWF Bulgaria in partnership with 12 other organisations launched the 'LENA' Interreg project to address the economic difficulties facing the lower reaches of the Danube region. The aim was to create new nature-based business initiatives and share experiences across 15 Natura 2000 sites in seven countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia and Serbia).

Over 1 100 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were involved in the initiative and received training

and assistance in order to add value to their businesses. Certificates for products from three protected areas were also introduced and around 280 000 tourists and local people from Natura 2000 sites were informed about the importance of the sites and nature-based jobs. A network of Danube guides has also been set up to support sustainable tourism across the region. Currently, the network has 100 trained guides in six countries, a protected logo and a website.

Multiple Natura 2000 sites in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia and Germany

Applicant: WWF Danube-Carpathian Program, Bulgaria

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/lena>

tzheleva@wwf.bg

Pro-Biodiversidad: shepherds as biodiversity conservators in Natura 2000

SPAIN

© Pro-Biodiversidad: shepherds as biodiversity conservators in Natura 2000



Much of the Picos de Europa mountain range in Spain is designated as Natura 2000. The area, however, suffers greatly from rural abandonment and the loss of extensive livestock farming, which is impacting negatively on its biodiversity. The Fundación para la Conservación del Quebrantahuesos therefore decided to create a special certification brand, Pro-Biodiversidad (Pro-Biodiversity), to support local wildlife-friendly farmers.

Since its launch in 2015, the brand has been a resounding success. Commercial agreements have been signed with supermarket chains and high-class tourist hotels (Paradores de Turismo) to sell the branded products, resulting in a 45% increase in revenue for the local farmers. Farmers who have joined the scheme are now guaranteed to sell all of their annual production at a fair price. The brand has also been highly beneficial for biodiversity, helping to maintain grassland areas, feed wild scavengers as well as reduce the risk of fires and land abandonment.

Natura 2000 sites: Picos de Europa (Asturias), Picos de Europa and Liébana (SCI and SPA), Spain

Applicant: Fundación para la Conservación del Quebrantahuesos

<https://quebrantahuesos.org>

infofcq@gmail.com

Promoting nature conservation while producing world quality wines

PORTUGAL



© Duorum Vinhos

In 2007, an abandoned estate was restored in a remote area of a large Natura 2000 site along the Douro River, Portugal, with the aim of producing high-quality wines while minimising the ecological impacts resulting from the planting of new vineyards. The site was found to host a small population of black wheatear (*Oenanthe leucura*) as well as several rare eagles and vultures.

Environmentally friendly agriculture and biological vine cultivation practices were introduced, grasslands and

no-intervention buffer areas were created around nesting sites, native woodland species were planted, and ancient olive and almond groves and other natural landscape features were maintained. A Black Wheatear Conservation Plan was also drawn up. The species has since returned to the area after several years of absence. Encouraged by its success, the estate has dedicated its top-quality wine brands to this bird. Called O.Leucura, the wines sell out quickly every season.

Natura 2000 sites: Douro Internacional e Vale do Águeda and Douro Internacional, Portugal

Applicant: Duorum Vinhos, S.A.

<https://www.duorum.pt>

n.vilela@sinergiae.pt

Reconciling interests/ perceptions

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



Diving for conservation

GERMANY



© Diving for conservation

There are more than 5 600 lakes in Northeast Germany, the most prominent example of which is Lake Stechlin, also a Natura 2000 site. Over the years, many of the lakes have become degraded, resulting in a dramatic increase in turbidity (cloudiness). To find out more about their conservation threats, an alliance was forged between conservationists and scuba divers to study what lies beneath the surface of the lakes.

Conservationists trained scuba divers in ecological surveys and discussed possible management solutions with them, which helped bring about a mutually beneficial partnership. Having completed a survey of most of the lakes in the Stechlin region, the initiative is being extended to other similar Natura 2000 sites in the region. The German Divers Federation has also introduced a course on “Diving for Conversation” which is available throughout the country and helps to cement further the relationship between scuba divers and conservationists.

Multiple Natura 2000 sites across Germany

Applicant: Naturschutzbund (NABU) Gransee e.V.

<https://www.nabu-naturschutztauchen.de>

info@nabu-naturschutztauchen.de

Collaboration Agreements in Natura 2000: farmers as main actors in management

SPAIN



© Collaboration Agreements in Natura 2000: farmers as main actors in management

Today, Natura 2000 sites cover around a third of the Extremadura Region in Spain. Initially, landowners and farmer associations objected strongly to the designation of their land as Natura 2000 for fear of restrictions on their economic activities. In a bid to reconcile interests, the regional authority began drawing up individual management agreements with any landowner willing to implement conservation measures, as well as other

voluntary actions, for the benefit of the protected species and habitats on their land. The funding for this came from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The initiative has been a resounding success: between 2014 and 2019, 295 agreements were signed in 19 Natura 2000 sites, representing a total investment of € 7 million under EAFRD. Landowners are now much more positive towards Natura 2000, with many seeing it as the main driving-force behind biodiversity conservation and sustainable development across the region.

19 Natura 2000 sites in Extremadura, Spain

Applicant: Junta de Extremadura

<http://extremambiente.juntaex.es/index.php>

ayudas.ads@juntaex.es

Ten keys to co-ownership for nature projects

BELGIUM

© Ten keys to co-ownership for nature projects



The Kruikebe Polders lie just south of Antwerp along the River Scheldt in Belgium. Until recently, the polders were just a patchwork of small private plots. When the Flemish government decided to incorporate the polders into a major flood protection and nature conservation scheme for the region, it was met with strong resistance from local landowners.

The re-naturalisation of the Kruikebe polders went ahead despite the objections, and 90 ha of alluvial forest and creeks were restored through a LIFE project. In order to overcome local resentment, much effort was also put into

communicating with the local community and demonstrating the value of the restored land. New recreational opportunities were also created.

All of this helped to change people's perceptions and generate enthusiasm for the area, which is now regarded as a tourist asset, providing additional income and jobs. The local community has since become the strongest ambassador for the sustainable long-term management of 'their' polders.

Natura 2000 sites: Schelde- en Durmeëstuarium van de Nederlandse grens tot Gent and Durme en Middenloop van de Schelde, Belgium

Applicants: Agentschap voor Natuur en Bos; De Vlaamse Waterweg; Gemeente Kruikebe; vzw Kruikeeks Natuurbehoud

<https://sigmaplan.be/en/about-the-sigmaplan/sigma-plan-international/scalluvia/>

veerle.campens@vlaanderen.be

Partnership for protection of Bulgarian old-growth forests in Natura 2000

BULGARIA

© Partnership for protection of Bulgarian old-growth forests in Natura 2000



About 55% of Bulgaria's forests have been included in the Natura 2000 network. At the beginning of the designation process, forest owners / managers were very much opposed to the designation of their land for fear of economic losses, and conflicts regularly arose over how to protect and use the forests. This in turn prevented any state action in favour of the protection of forest habitats in Natura 2000 sites.

To address this problem, a coalition of government bodies, national parks and NGOs carried out extensive surveys and

GIS mapping to draw up an inventory of old-growth forests in state-owned forest habitats within Natura 2000 across Bulgaria. After a long process of exchange, discussions and reviews with interested stakeholders, close to 110 000 ha of additional old-growth forests was designated for protection and excluded from harvesting. This represents nearly 10% of each forest habitat type within the Natura 2000 network and translates into a 3% extension of the network.

Multiple Natura 2000 sites across Bulgaria

Applicant: Executive Forest Agency (EFA); Ministry of Agriculture; Food and Forestry, Bulgaria; WWF Bulgaria; Association of Parks in Bulgaria; Balkan Wildlife Society

<http://www.iag.bg/lang/2/index>

ndoncheva@wwf.bg

ECO KARST - For Nature and For People

**SLOVENIA, AUSTRIA, GERMANY, CROATIA,
HUNGARY AND ROMANIA**



© ECO KARST - For Nature and For People

The Interreg-funded ECO KARST project brought together seven protected areas – so-called karst bio-regions - from across nine countries in order to find ways of generating and supporting new socio-economic opportunities that are in keeping with the extremely fragile karstic Natura 2000 habitats.

The first step was to map all the ecosystem services generated by the karst habitats in these seven sites. The

maps were then used to prepare Local Action Plans which combined the necessary conservation guidelines with the potential for local, sustainable and nature-friendly economic development. The Action Plans include some 146 new measures that are of common interest to both park authorities and local stakeholders and identify shared responsibilities. The project also sought to actively encourage new socio-economic activities in the sites and therefore launched a call for Pro-Biodiversity Businesses (PBBs). In total, 23 businesses were awarded support.

Multiple Natura 2000 sites in Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia

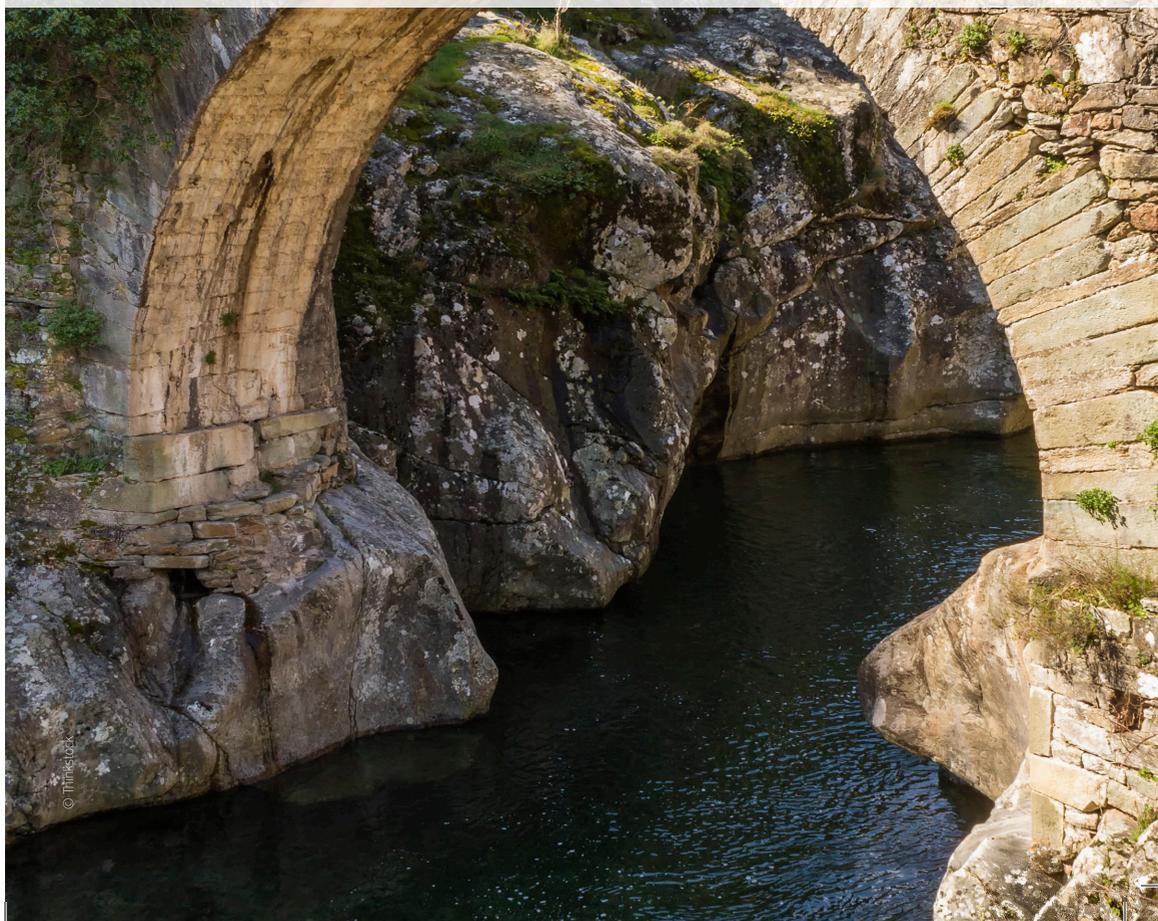
Applicant: Slovenia Forest Service

[http://www.interreg-danube.eu/
approved-projects/eco-karst](http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/eco-karst)

saso.gorjanc@zgs.si

Cross-border cooperation and Networking

This Award goes to partnerships between stakeholders that are aimed at addressing challenges arising from Natura 2000 more effectively than if the partners had operated individually. Partnerships can be cross-border between Member States or within federal states or concern networking on a particular important theme for Natura 2000.



Cooperation across seas: roseate tern colony networking

IRELAND, FRANCE AND UNITED KINGDOM



© Cooperation across seas: roseate tern colony networking

A partnership of tern colony managers from four environmental NGOs and one statutory authority have combined forces to save the highly endangered roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii*). Conservation action for the roseate tern started on Rockabill island in Ireland in 1989 when the population stood at just 152 pairs. Thanks to many years of effort, the population here has since increased to around 1 600 pairs, representing almost half of the north-western European population.

However, while the Rockabill population began to increase, other roseate tern colonies in north-western Europe have continued to decline. One of the main objectives of the LIFE-funded project was therefore also to transfer knowledge and practical expertise directly to other colony managers. Thanks to this networking initiative, all the key staff from extant roseate tern colonies are now working together in applying consistent methodologies to boost the species recovery across the EU.

Multiple Natura 2000 sites in Ireland, the UK and France

Applicants: BirdWatch Ireland - BirdLife Ireland; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

<http://roseatetern.org/index.html>

snewton@birdwatchireland.ie

Joint efforts for safe and wildlife-friendly transportation networks in the Carpathians

CZECH REPUBLIC, AUSTRIA, HUNGARY, ROMANIA AND SLOVAKIA



© Joint efforts for safe and wildlife-friendly transportation networks in the Carpathians

Large areas of the Carpathian Mountains continue to be under pressure from a rapid growth in the transport infrastructure resulting in landscape fragmentation. The EU Interreg-funded networking initiative TRANSGREEN was therefore set up to develop environmentally friendly road and rail transport solutions. Sixteen partners from six countries representing a wide cross-section of sectors and institutions at all levels have worked together to share experiences and best practices.

Joint methodologies have been developed for monitoring collisions and road-kills, and three in-depth analyses and 'Catalogues of Measures' have been produced for the three pilot areas. The final outcome is a comprehensive guide - 'Guidelines for Wildlife and Traffic in the Carpathians' - which describes how to achieve integrated transport infrastructure planning, construction, management and monitoring while minimising landscape fragmentation and taking into account biodiversity conservation.

Multiple Natura 2000 sites in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania

Applicant: Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/transgreen>

marta.vojtkova@nature.cz

Network of Natura 2000 stations in Thuringia

GERMANY

© Network of Natura 2000 stations in Thuringia



In 2016, the Thuringian network of 12 Natura 2000 stations was launched with a view to assisting the management of almost 300 Natura 2000 sites across Thuringia. Each station acts as an interface between administrative and volunteer conservation, land users, agricultural authorities and the public in its area. The stations are run by NGOs that have a lot of local experience of nature conservation. In addition to supporting the implementation of the Natura 2000

management plans, they provide advice to land-users and local communities on any Natura 2000 conservation issues. The stations also undertake a wide range of education and awareness-raising activities.

To date, 39 nature and landscape projects have been developed and funded for a total of € 8.1 million. Two major conferences have also been organised and two editions of the national Natura 2000 Farmer Awards have been held, demonstrating the success of the initiative.

Multiple Natura 2000 sites in Thuringia, Germany

Applicant: Thuringian Ministry of Environment, Energy and Nature Conservation (TMUEN)

<https://natura2000-thuringen.de>

henryk.baumbach@tmuen.thuringen.de

Reinforcing the roles of remote sensing in Natura 2000 monitoring

SPAIN, BELGIUM, GERMANY, SWEDEN AND UNITED KINGDOM

© Reinforcing the roles of remote sensing in Natura 2000 monitoring



A recently published Springer book on the role of remote sensing in nature conservation is the first of its kind to focus on transferring remote sensing technology - including research findings and practical tools - to managers of protected areas, such as Natura 2000 sites. The book illustrates a number of specific sites that have successfully used remote sensing methods to assess and monitor habitat conservation status. Its publication is a culminating networking achievement in terms of raising awareness for

the use of remote sensing in monitoring Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas.

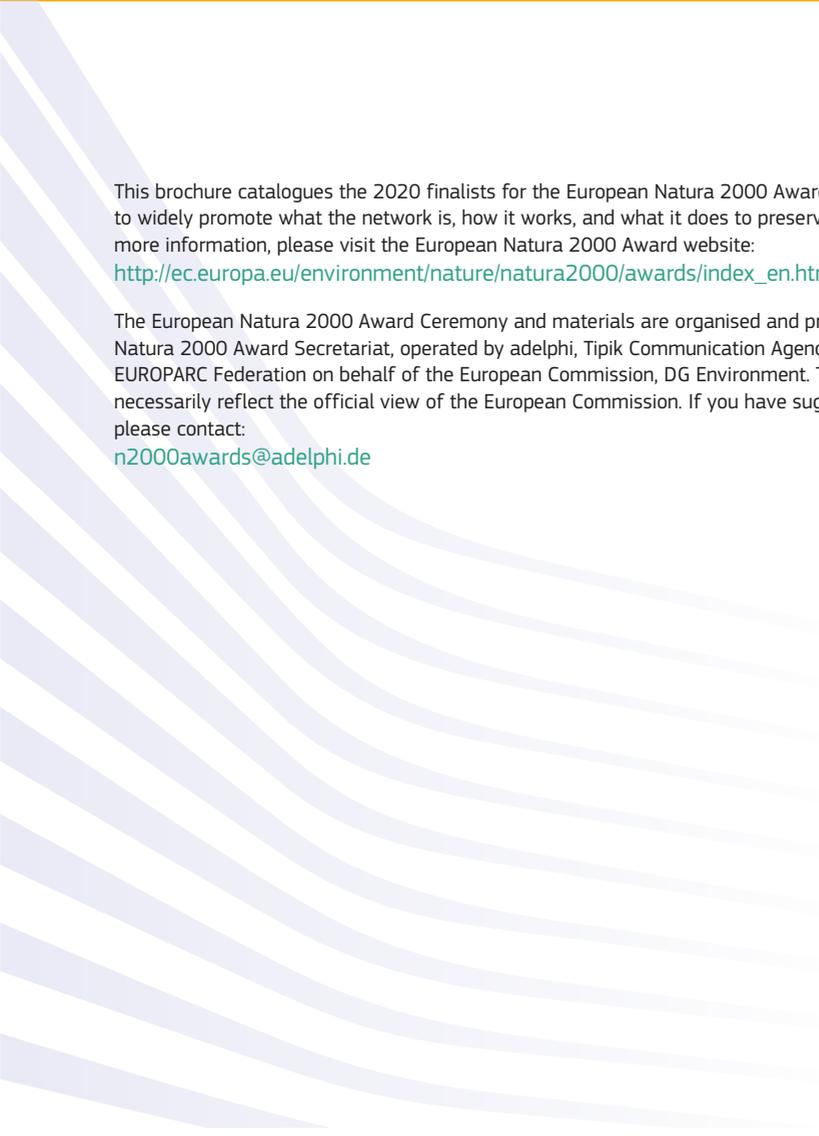
The idea for the book emerged from several European meetings on habitat mapping in Natura 2000 sites, where it became clear there was an urgent need to bridge the gap between conservation practitioners and remote sensing experts. This work is now being taken forward through the Eurosite Remote Sensing User Support Group which involves experts from 15 European countries.

Main Natura 2000 sites: Doñana, Spain; Kalmthoutse Heide, Belgium; and Wahner Heide, Germany

Applicants: Estación Biológica de Doñana-CSIC; Natural Resources Wales; Aberystwyth University, Wales, UK

<https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319643304>

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This brochure catalogues the 2020 finalists for the European Natura 2000 Award. The aim of the Award is to widely promote what the network is, how it works, and what it does to preserve Europe's biodiversity. For more information, please visit the European Natura 2000 Award website:

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

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n2000awards@adelphi.de