

Czech Society for Ornithology and Ceskomoravsky Gravel sign partnership agreement

Title

On Friday 16 March, the Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO), BirdLife Partner in the Czech Republic, and Ceskomoravsky sterk, member of the HeidelbergCement Group, signed an agreement pinning down their long-term commitment to the conservation of nature. It is likewise the first national partnership concluded since the launch of the European partnership between BirdLife and HeidelbergCement in September 2011 for the conservation of biodiversity.

The agreement deepens the existing co-operation between the two organisations. For many years, CSO and Ceskomoravsky sterk have been working together in nature and landscape protection, including projects to protect rare breeding bird species at gravel pits and quarries. One successful project is the construction of floating islands on which species such as the Common Tern can nest safely. The islands - assembled in gravel pits - are readily accepted by the birds that have lost their natural habitat due to the correction of riverbanks. The results are rewarding: the numbers of Common Tern pairs on the islands have increased to more than 50 which represent at least 10% of the breeding population in the country. This agreement was signed to follow up on these positive results and to widen the common approach to other areas and species.

There is a mutually benefit for both organisations in the development of this partnership. Nature Conservation is an integral part of Ceskomoravsky sterk's environmental management, and expert advice from CSO in this field will allow effective search and exploitation of mining areas. For CSO, this approach clearly benefits biodiversity, especially considering that half of Ceskomoravsky sterk's quarries are within or close to protected areas or areas important for biodiversity. This partnership is the opportunity for the NGO, by sharing its expertise and experience, to help improve the conservation of the sites.

CSO/BirdLife in the Czech Republic hopes that this partnership will demonstrate that Nature conservation benefits and is not an obstacle to the legitimate exploitation of mineral resources, and will encourage other mining companies to follow their example.

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