

EU funds help BirdLife Partners to protect our nature

Title

As recently announced, six BirdLife Partners received funding for their LIFE+ Nature & Biodiversity projects to be implemented in the coming years. Of the 194 proposals received, the European Commission selected the 84 most relevant Nature and Biodiversity ones, contributing to the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives, to the Natura 2000 network and ultimately to stop biodiversity loss in Europe. 'LIFE Nature & Biodiversity funding has made a great difference for many of the threatened birds and biodiversity in Europe', commented Boris Barov, European Conservation Manager at BirdLife International. 'As usual BirdLife Partners have shown a remarkable success rate in their applications to this exciting programme and what is even more important is that many of our projects end up in the hall of fame of 'Best projects''. The projects from the BirdLife Partnership cover a wide range of priorities: from restoring habitats invaded by invasive alien species to implementing action plans to save endangered species. With two new projects Natuurpunt (BirdLife in Belgium) aims to restore more than 60ha of threatened habitats and species under the Habitat Directive, including sandy soils and ones which depend on freshwater tides. This very important Belgian region is home to several rare and threatened species, such as Great-crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* and European Tree Frog *Hyla arborea*. The project aims to promote socio-economic and tourist potential of the area and informing people about some exotic species such as waterplants and weeds which could threaten the vulnerable water habitats and grasslands. Focusing on its overseas departments, the French project, led by LPO (BirdLife in France), wants to contribute to stop the biodiversity loss in Reunion, Martinique and the French Guyana by developing techniques to reduce the human induced mortality of Reunion Harrier *Circus maillardi* (Endangered), protecting and managing sites and developing new tools adapted to these regions' particular conditions. These measures would allow controlling rat predation and increase the population of Reunion Cuckooshrike *Coracina newtoni* (Critically endangered), protecting the last remaining habitats of White-breasted Thrasher *Ramphocinclus brachyurus* (Endangered) and develop the first conservation plan for Agami Heron *Agamia agami* (Least Concern). With its project SOS/BirdLife Slovakia will reverse the decline of Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (Least Concern) and Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (Near Threatened) in Slovakia by restoring appropriate water regimes in degraded wetlands. The project proposed by BSPB (BirdLife in Bulgaria) will introduce land management measures in Northern Bulgaria to ensure suitable habitats and stabilize the wintering population of Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis* (Endangered), one the most threatened goose species in the world. Linking the production of biomass as a renewable energy source with the large scale mechanized management of the fen mires home to the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (Vulnerable), OTOP (BirdLife in Poland) will

demonstrate that conservation management of this habitat can also be economically viable. The British project led by RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) will focus on increasing the newly reintroduced UK population of Great Bustard *Otis tarda* (Vulnerable), establishing special management areas, monitoring the interaction of the species with the environment and developing agri-environment options to improve the suitability of the wider countryside for the species.
