



Partnership for environmental protection.



Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych
Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej



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On the Narew River, Anna Suchowolec,
dr Eberhard Schneider, Andreas Pöpke

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Project realization- brief description

- Gabriela Kulakowska PTOP

What are Norway Grants?

It is a non-repayable financial assistance for Poland, in the form of two mechanisms: the so-called EEA (European Economic Area) Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (commonly known as Norway Grants). It is donated by three countries: Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Although they are not member states of the European Union, they still benefit from the internal EU market.

Pursuant to international agreements, EFTA (European Free Trade Association) - EEA states have provided the beneficiary countries (i.e. EEA member states which acceded to the European Union in 2004 and 2007, as well as the states of Spain, Greece and Portugal) with the assistance for the years 2004-2009. Out of the total amount of 1,239 mld. euro, Poland received 533,51 mln. euro in financial assistance.

What is the Cross-border Partnership Programme?

Cross-border Partnership Programme is a grant giving programme which promotes the idea of cross-border cooperation. It is carried out by the East European Democratic Centre, a non-governmental organization, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The programme is financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

The purpose of the programme is to enable the

transfer and exchange of experience, good practices, and knowledge, which results in increasing socio-economic cohesion in all regions of the EU. This process makes Poland an interpreter of social phenomena between Eastern and Western Europe.

In the three calls for proposals (2 in 2009, one in 2010) the Centre spent over 1.1 mln EUR on projects carried out in the partnership. The execution of projects with partnership organizations from the European Union states was donated about 12 500 EUR at a time, whereas trilateral projects (partners from the Union, as well as from Ukraine, Belarus and Kaliningrad Oblast) - over 30 000 EUR.

management of nature conservation in NE Poland

Some information on Vogelschutz Komitee e.V.

It is an association set up on April, 5 1996 for the purpose of protecting birds, nature, animals and their natural environment. VsK helps endangered wild birds: mainly on a local scale, in Germany, though other European countries are also included.

Vogelschutz Komitee e.V is a member of the German League for Nature and Environment, a body which gathers organizations active in the field of environmental protection. It cooperates with organizations which protect birds in differ-



Workshop participants in Poland – Białowieża

In August, 2009, as a result of project selection process, PTOP in cooperation with Vogelschutz Komitee e.V., was granted the resources to execute the project „Forward PTOP!, the increase of the NGOs’ competence is an opportunity for comprehensive

ent countries: in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ecuador, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Holland, Norway, Austria, Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, the Republic of South Africa, Cyprus. VsK is committed

to activities which are aimed at increasing the number of birds' nesting places, it also strongly opposes any abuses which occur in the process of live animal trade. Additionally, it speaks against hunting along birds' migratory routes in the countries of southern Europe. For example, volunteers travel to Cyprus and risk their lives struggling against local poachers: destroying snares and glue traps set to hunt for small migrating birds (these birds are caught to be eaten – illegally). VsK undertakes activities towards the protection of bird sanctuaries in Germany, Spain, France, Poland – by means of supporting land purchase.

That is how PTOP cooperates with Vogelschutz Komitee.

VsK is financed by private donations, as well as by carrying out different projects. Its annual budget is about 1 million EUR, which makes it very similar to the PTOP budget, with the exception that we currently benefit mainly both from EU (Infrastructure and Environment Programme, Life+) and state subsidies (National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, the EkoFund).

Dr Eberhard Schneider is the head of Vogelschutz Komitee e.V. A biologist by education, he is a specialist in European hare biology. A one-man institution, a person of great knowledge in biology of different species of the flora and fauna, an expert in environmental

protection, Dr Schneider personally answers e-mails, takes decisions on which projects should be pursued. He is also personally involved in fundraising and purchasing land, he travels to meet other organizations, and actively



opposes poachers in Cyprus.

The History of Our Friendship

We began our cooperation about 5 years ago. It was Vogelschutz Komitee which were actively searching for a suitable partner in Poland. One of University of Bialystok employees directed VsK to PTOP. Since that time, PTOP and VsK have been in regular contact and have been joining forces to carry out different projects that involve an active environmental protection, e.g. VsK has so far transferred over 600,000 PLN for the purpose of purchasing land and creating public nature reserves – by June 2010 65 ha have been bought. Other activities which were financially supported by VsK: mowing mead-

ows and bird inventorying on the grounds first reclaimed with the financial assistance of VsK.

To get more information on the projects carried out by VsK, go to www.vogelschutz-komitee.de.

Ponds in Linum

Together, we form the project “Forward PTOP!”

Our plan for Vogelschutz Komitee was as follows – the organization is supposed to act as both advisory and training institution. We intended for our employ-

ees to broaden their knowledge and gain experience in efficient management of public nature sanctuaries, all for the purpose of improving the quality of environmental protection, thus increasing biodiversity and holding back succession (changes in the environment, open spaces getting overgrown with forests). Yet another aspect of the training was acquiring knowledge on creating healthy relations – public relations – with different institutions: local community, the authorities, institutions which are responsible for environmental protection (Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection - RDOŚ), and for environmental management (The State Forests – LP), as well as other non-government organizations (NGOs).

VsK, in cooperation with z PTOP, named a consultant, who then came to Poland, visited PTOP area of operations and prepared a report where he suggests a proper action programme for the future. Summarized report can be found inside the brochure, whereas the full version will soon be published on www.ptop.org.pl.

We made an assumption that Germany was the ultimate model: they have a lot for money to spend on protecting all that has been yet unprotected, they have transparent law as to what is allowed and what is not, they have identified their priorities and have means to fulfil them with ease. But the reality – it has been revealed only with our participation in the project.

Our mutual operating plan!

The Project was created to carry out 4 main actions:

1. Inviting a group of VsK employees and partners to Poland, indentifying the needs and prob-

Linum - an exhibition on the marsh turtle conservation project



lems characteristic of PTOP,

2. Inviting a German consultant to Poland, who then would suggest appropriate solutions,

3. Sending a group of PTOP employees to Germany to take part in workshops, for the purpose of mastering good management practice as to environmental protection, Vogelschutz Komitee being the model,

4. Issuing a “how-to” good practice guide – which would sum up all the workshops, activities and trips. It is supposed to be a compendium of knowledge, a digest intended to be made available to other institutions and natural persons, with whom we presently cooperate. In addition, it will be something to use in the nearest future, when the project is completed, to establish partnerships with both foreign and Polish organizations.

What is our purpose?

PTOP has been operating for the purpose of an active environmental protection throughout the territory of Norh-

ern Podlasie for 25 years now.

At present, PTOP manages about 1300ha of land within the territory of public nature reserves. The Society has profound k n o w l e d g e

and considerable experience. It a perfect point of departure for the Society to be a leader – a coordinator for different activities undertaken on a much broader scale; such as projects, executed in cooperation with public administration, which aim not only at environmental protection, but also at transferring knowledge as to the balanced management of local population. PTOP employs young people well educated in natural sciences who are not skilled in the ways of marketing, public relations building, initiating social dialogue, they are also not prepared to participate in such a dialogue. This project is meant to satisfy these needs: workshops in Poland and in Germany are supposed to deliver a proper kind of “know-how” in areas where PTOP employees need it. The Germans from VsK are supposed to present how it is done in Germany, a country with high level of economic development and high standard of living, where expenditures on environmental protection are significant, where social support for such actions is enormous.

Project completion - the reality

Resources for project completion were granted, we signed the agreement with the grant manager, we got an advance payment in October 2009 and the project stopped. Due to the trip plan of potential participants of the project, the end of the year, blizzards in all of Europe, the first study visit took place only

in March 2010. At that time, 5 people singled out by dr Eberhard Schneider came to stay in Poland for 5 days.

They were:

Eberhard Schneider the president of Vogelschutz Komitee e.V.

Cornelius Voyer – VsK employee, the protector of the crane refuge on the ponds of Linum (near Berlin)

Andreas Wenk – the protector of Oranienbaumer Heide refuge (near Dessau) and Wulfener Bruch refuge (near Magdeburga), the employee of Primigenius GmbH.

Karl-Heinz Sass – a photographer and a film-maker, a volunteer for Landschaftsfoerderung Oberes Rhinluch organization.

Thomas Maschke – the protector of Ziegeunerwäldchen refuge (near Hanover), the employee of Biotop-Management-Initiative e.V, a non-government organization.

Our guests came to Poland on March 3, 2010. We then travelled to Białowieża. In Białowieża, employees of PTOp met their Vogelschutz Komitee e.V counterparts.

Polish participants of the meeting were the following:

Roman Kalski manager of PTOp secretariat in Białystok,

Ewa Łazowska the chief ac-

countant, who is in charge of the funds for all projects carried out by PTOp,

Tomasz Kułakowski the president of PTOp,

Przemysław Bielicki vice-president of PTOp,

Jarosław Chyra coordinator of the project “Protection of lesser spotted eagle in the selected areas Nature 2000” Białowieża Forest region,

Marta Potocka PTOp employee, coordinator of the protection of forest gallinaceous birds pro-

gramme.

Anna Suchowolec, PTOp employee, coordinator of Protection of the Narew Valley project,

The participants were given two presentations. Tomasz Kułakowski was discussing regions where birds are nesting in North east Poland, as well as what kind of activities PTOp undertakes for the purpose of protective protection, what sort of interventions the Society makes, and what projects it carries out. The second presentation was given by Ania Suchowolec, who discussed the activities undertaken by PTOp within the buffer



gramme,

Gabriela Kułakowska, coordinator of „Forward PTOp!” project, assistant to the coordinator of the protection of forest gallinaceous birds programme

Edyta Kapowicz coordinator of the project “Protection of lesser spotted eagle in the selected areas Nature 2000” Knyszynska Forest (Puszcza Knyszynska)

Linum – an artificial pond for turtles zone of the Narew National Park, and the renaturalization of the Narew river. We then started a discussion on different subject that were of interest to us, e.g. how to diversify fundraising. VsK raises funds mostly by means of donations from private persons. The organization employs a fundraising agency, which selects a number of addresses of people (in Germany one is able to buy

addresses) who might be interested in making a donation. At present, their mailing list consists of 80,000 names.

On average, once a month they print and send leaflets, appealing for donations towards a specific goal: land purchase for Cranes' nests, saving endangered areas from devastation. Likewise, they were appealing for donations towards projects carried out by PTOp: the purchase of Kwiecewo polder in the Warmia region (an environmentally valuable area), land purchase in the village of Żywkowo, also in the Warmia region. At the end of May and the beginning of June VsK is going to start a campaign for saving areas in North-east Poland, where Black Grouses can be found. We hope the campaign will prove to be successful and thanks to our western neighbours' generosity we will be able to purchase more areas which are environmentally valuable.

The next day began with visiting Białowieża. We strolled along the Narewka river valley. Roman Kalski provided us with a description of the present state of Białowieża glade, he also discussed the dynamics of changes that occur in the landscape – how the Białowieża glade is being overgrown. Since the farmers were gone from Białowieża, there have not been any farm animals, such as horses or cows which could be grazed on the open grounds of the river valley. Because of that, these grounds are slowly becoming a

wasteland, overgrown with tussock and willow shrubs, with birch and other broadleaf trees. Biodiversity within this areas is becoming reduced – species such as Peewits, Corncrakes or birds of prey are disappearing. Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection in Białystok, in cooperation with PTOp, is going to carry out the project “Protection of Lesser Spotted Eagle in the selected areas Nature 2000”. We are going to clear the area of trees and bushes, we are also planning to mow the wasteland for the purpose of transforming it into meadows, where cows could be grazed. We also want to carry out a training project for farmers, our intention would be to teach them how to receive subventions for running ecological farms. Consequently, we will make farmers interested in working the meadows, in animal husbandry and cattle pasturage in the area.

In a glade right in front of the entrance to the Białowieża

subject, PTOp is purchasing several plots for the purpose of restoring them. Our dream is for huge forest mammals – European Bison and Deer – to cross the fence which separates the reserve from the glade and graze freely on the meadows – fully legally. Our immediate plans include mowing the first plot and setting up a Dutch barn for all the animals, small and large, insects, mammals and birds.

In the afternoon, we were watching meadows, which were flooded by the river of Rudnia near the village of Puchły. Following the spring melt, the river overflowed its banks and flooded all the meadows within the area of several hundred hectares. PTOp owns about 270 hectares there.

Our guests from Germany were impressed with the surroundings. They suggested we should set up a National Park there, though actually it is much easier to take actions on the pro-



Hanover – meeting at the Adfinitas Agency

active protection in the areas which are formally protected within the boundaries of Nature 2000 area. Setting up a national park would mean that the area would be “conserved” as it is, and all the changes would

National Park nature reserve, as a part of the aforementioned pro-

be prevented. PTOp, on the other hand, often clears an

area, removes trees, mows – our volunteers know exactly what that means.

On March 5, 2010, the whole group visited the valleys of Narew and Biebrza. In the afternoon, they travelled to Warmia region, to the Olsztyn office. Anna Suchowolec became the group assistant. Ania presented a programme of renaturalization of the buffer zone within the area of the Narew National Park – a comparison of different parts of the Narew river: its regulated and natural sections. More details on the actions carried out in the area can be found in the article by Ania Suchowolec.

On March, 6-7, 2010 we visited Warmia and Mazury region, Sebastian Menderski, the manager of PTOP Olsztyn office was the group assistant. Our guests visited Kwiecewo, Sątopy and Żywkowo.

In Żywkowo, Eberhard Schneider suggested that we should set up in the farm a production line of mozzarella, he also recommended opening a cafe in one of the outbuildings, all for the purpose of keeping the tourists for a little longer. Piotrek Hryszko, who is the host of our farm wrote an article on the PTOP activity in the region, and its cooperation with local farmers.

In Dobrze Miasto, our guests visited a local nature photographer, Andrzej Waszczuk, who presented a set of photos of Kwiecewo and its surroundings – thanks to him all could experience Kwiecewo in the hatching season. Everybody liked the

photos very much.

More information on Kwiecewo and Sątopy can be found in the article by Sebastian Menderski.

That was the course of the visit of our Partner Organization in Poland. After two weeks we revisited them in Germany.



Berlin – BAT volunteer with a charge

What happened in Germany on March, 21 to 27, 2010?

In these days PTOP employees participated in the study visit in Germany.

The participants were:
Roman Kalski,
Anna Suchowolec,
Edyta Kapowicz,
Gabriela Kułakowska.

We got to Berlin by train. Our base was located in Linum, in the Adebarr Pension.

Day one – expedition to the ponds of Linum.

The ponds of Linum are located in the valley of the Rhin river (Elbe tributary). The area of the valley of the Rhin river – in its upper reaches was formed as a result of processes similar to the ones in the Niecka Gródecko – Michałowska (Gródecko-Michałowo Basin). This area was shaped as a result of the last ice age. A hollow, left behind by a retreating glacier, held a lake, which was gradually overgrown, and the whole area became a huge peat bog. In modern times, people began to dig up the peat, which was then sent on barges down the channels to the river Rhin and then taken to Berlin along the water route. Here lies the difference between our G-M Basin and the area surrounding Linum – most of the peat was dug up and burnt. At present, there are about 40 ponds there - 400 hectares in area, as well as meadows which give 4-5 cuts a year (the meadows are thoroughly fertilized) and arable lands (asparagus). Over 2000 hectares belong to one agricultural company, which owns similar land in over 100 places in Germany and across Western Europe. The company breeds animals and grows plants in accordance with overall economic situation: dairy cattle, corn, soy – for biofuel. It seems to be an obvious problem, for it is much easier to negotiate with a farmer, who lives in the area with his family and cares for birds more than, e.g., a millionaire who does not even know where Linum is.

Landschaftsförderverein Oberes Rhinluch e.V., a local non-governmental organization involved in environmental protection, cooperates with VsK; together they take actions for the purpose of protecting meadows where over 80,000 Cranes and 50,000 geese spend nights in autumn. Linum fish ponds were created for the purpose of producing fish – carps. It is a private property. There are meadows nearby, which are exploited intensively. To the north, the river Rhin forms the border with the ponds. As peat was dug up here for several hundred years, nowadays the river flows over 1.5 metres above ground level.

The owners lease ponds to VsK. It was possible to purchase one of the ponds. Brandenburgia government (the name of the Land – a German administrative unit) also sold VsK a ditch which drains the area. Managing water resources seems to be very easy – the Rhin feeds the ponds with water with no need to install additional devices. However, VsK cannot close the ditch and raise water in the ponds, as private meadows cannot be too humid – the landowners do not agree to any activities which could result in decreasing the effectiveness of farming.

VsK continues extensive fish farming in the ponds. Several ponds hold sturgeons for caviar – but as for now the farming is uneconomic. We also saw some Mute Swans on the ponds, a pair of Whooper Swans, as well as Greylag Geese,

Bean Geese, Tufted Ducks, Mallards, Common Goldeneyes, Eurasian Wigeons and a Common Teal. There were also Common Snipes, Terns and 2 pairs of Ospreys, as well as a Harrier. Near the road which is available to general public, there is a pond where courses for young people are run by volunteers from Landschaftsförderverein Oberes Rhinluch e.V. Off the Crane breeding season, kids cut down reed (by hand), they also build nest platforms, having a great time in the process.

In the afternoon, we visited employees of Arbeitsgemeinschaft Natur und Artenschutz e.V. There, we spoke with Mr Norberte Schneeweiß about some problems concerning environmental protection. Last year, a 4-year project came to an end; it was carried out in partnership by 11 different non-governmental organizations and public administration institutions involved in environmental protection. They came from 3 countries: Poland, Germany and Lithuania. Both PTOP (its Olsztyn office) and Arbeitsgemeinschaft took part in the project. The project “Protection of European Pond Turtle and Amphibians in the North European lowlands” has its own official website - www.glis.lt/life. In order to take actions towards protecting turtles and amphibians, the activists in non-governmental regional organizations conduct difficult negotiations with local farmers. Every year they negotiate on flooding the area of about 200 hectares where

Cranes rest. Most of the farmers agree, provided a compensation is paid, though they do not give permission to flood the meadows annually for several years, which makes it extremely difficult to prepare long-term plans as to protective actions in the area.

As a continuation of the aforementioned project concerning the protection of amphibians and reptiles, some activities are being planned in order to improve water relations within small waterholes. Government organization employees, together with some volunteers, cooperate, e.g. in populating newly created objects with specimen of chosen amphibians and reptiles. Unfortunately, they are confronted by problems with huge agricultural companies, which do not assent to any changes in water relations within the area of their lands. In addition, it is difficult to campaign for the environment, as the entrepreneur – who pays huge taxes and employs hundreds of people – is a strong lobbyist and the government often concurs with his demands.

Eberhard Schneider pointed to the fact that there is a serious threat that when the restrictions on land purchase are lifted in Poland, huge companies will appear, and negotiations with such “farmers” is going to become virtually impossible. They are people conscious of their power and laws, and they are orientated towards making their lands profitable. To sum up, our “humane” farmers are not that bad for PTOP – the meeting

was a heartening eye-opener for us. First, we have something to protect. Secondly, our farmers, who live where we take actions, are relatively sensitive to the fate of wild birds and other animals.

Moreover, sometimes we can make use of the law and force local population to take certain actions even if there is opposition.

Day two Oranienburg, Wulfener.

Visit to Oranienburg in the area of the former military training grounds. It is a land with the surface area of about 800 hectares. So far, Primigenius gGmbH have been farming 300 hectares of land, but from this year on they are planning to extend the reclaimed area. About 30 cows and 13 Koniks graze on a dry moorland pasture. The whole area is fenced with an electric fence, as the cows are sometimes aggressive and the fence is supposed to protect a passerby from being attacked. Herds are kept in conditions very similar to natural ones – animals are on the paddock all year round, koniks are not given additional food, though cows, being more demanding, are fed with hay. Cows are not milked. As you can see in the picture, cross-breeding resulted in cows similar to an aurochs – they are huge, shaggy animals.

Koniks and cows serve a significant role in the area. Since one cannot use farming equipment there – there are lots of unexploded shells in the ground – cows and Koniks in a way “cultivate” the area for the purpose of reclaiming it and increasing

biodiversity. Extensively grazed areas give birth to new plant species, which in turn results in increasing the number of small birds.

In the afternoon, we visited the area known as Wulfener Bruch. Description of the project, prepared by Andreas Wenk, the Primigenius gGmbH employee, can be found in the guide.

Day three - near Hanover.

We set off early in the morning, heading towards Hanover. A 3-hour drive along the highway at a speed of 140 kph. We pass windmills, windmills, and windmills again. In the evening, when we will drive back, the darkness is going to be lightened with thousands of flashing red lights. But now we are on the highway, overtaking lines of huge lorries which transport parts of windmills – they are enormous; we leave behind convoys of Polish lorries transporting cars to Poland, the drivers talking and talking on their CB radios (“What could they possibly be talking about” – our German friends wonder; our group is also very talkative), we pass cars with registration plates from all over Europe.

Along the way, we have a conversation with Eberhard about the dangers arising from building wind farms. VsK is in possession of data about how many migrating birds are killed by wind farms. The worst situation is in the areas where windmills are surrounded by forests; in these places birds rise up to

such heights where they hit rotating propellers. We will do our best to get the data and put it on our website.

Finally we got to the nature reserve in Harz mountains. Its surface area totals 85 hectares. 4 environmental protection organizations cooperate in the area. The whole area is surrounded with extensively cultivated fields. The nature reserve is a refuge for migrating birds and other animals which find shelter and a place to rest there. In this very guide you can find an article by Thomas Maschke, describing the area. Thomas has been acting within this area since he was a child, he personally dismantled drainage pipes and sorted 5000 pipes into piles, all for the purpose of preventing the outflow of water from the area.

Next, together with Eberhard Schneider, we visited Adfinitas GmbH, a fundraising agency which produces informational and promotional campaigns for Vogelschutz Komitee e.V. We had a chance to speak with the manager of the agency – Mr Klas Brokmann. Fundraising is a relatively new idea in Poland. It is a way to gather funds for charity. Environmental protection is not in the eyes of Polish people a priority, which should be supported with private money – excluding 1% of taxes, donated annually by Polish taxpayers to organizations of their choice (annual donations to PTO are about 20,000 PLN).

Berlin Panorama from the Zytadela fortress of Spandau

It likely though that this situation is going to change within a dozen or so years. In addition, as Mr Brokmann pointed out – the Poles are a nation very eager to share with those who need help (that is how we are perceived abroad). A large portion of our society contributes to a Sunday collection, thus supporting a non-governmental institution.

Day four –Nuthe-Nieplitz Nature Park.

We travel south, passing Potsdam. We arrive to the Nuthe-Nieplitz Nature Park. The Park's surface area is over 6,000 hectares. In the management offices of the Park, we meet the employees of the Park, volunteers, and Vogelschutz Komitee e.V sponsors. We talk about actions taken within the area of the Park – the development of ecotourism, projects on environmental protection, and projects carried out in cooperation with Polish non-governmental organizations. The Park is a part of the Southern Brandenburg Ecological Corridor, also known as the great green banana (www.wildkorridor.de).

Here Alan was born, a wolf which travelled 1400 kilometres - he crossed Odra, Wisla, Biebrza and got all the way to Augustow Forest; he then set off for Belarus. Alan's exploits were described on a website www.polskiwilk.org.pl/alan. His journey proved that animal use green corridors and that building

over road passages makes sense.

There are extensively used meadows within the area of the Park; they are mowed and made available for grazing just as PTOp meadows. Through a telescope, we saw a female White-tailed Eagle sitting in a nest. Park workers try to help birds of prey by building nest platforms and nesting boxes, e.g. for Kestrels. In Germany 90% of Osprey population nest on artificial platforms.

We also visited Zarth nature reserve. The name of this area comes from the Polish word "czort" (devil). It used to be a marshy forest. Now it is dried up considerably. We invited the Park representatives to come to Poland and see small retention objects built by PTOp in the Białowieża Forest.

More details on Zarth can be found in the article by Dr Eberhard Schneider.

Day five - Raketewald and bats.

It is a beech forest, purchased by VsK – about 12 hectares. The area used to be occupied by the armed forces. Trees are marked with bullets; the clearing is certainly not

an easy task. In addition, some trees bear writings in Cyrillic "Wania loves Natasza – 1956". In the area of the refuge managed by VsK there are numerous dead trees and lots of small singing birds. Additionally, there is a bunker in the area, where bats spend winter.



Next, we are about to get to one of the districts in Berlin - Spandau. We travel to Zitadelle. It is a stronghold, erected in 16th century. There is now a museum there. VsK's partner organization - Berliner Artenschutz Team - BAT e.V. is located there. Numerous bats spend winter in the vaults of the Citadel. Volunteers form BAT organization estimate the number of bats at 10,000 mammals. People help bats – they feed and tend to wounded animals and guard them from unwelcomed guests. Moreover, the cellar under the Citadel holds a terrarium, where huge fruit bats can be peeked

at (in winter, it is easier to feed fruit bats than our European bats, which are insectivorous). Children who celebrate their birthday can enter terrariums and feed bats from their hands.

It is a nice example of how propagate environmental protection and how to utilize animals' natural refuge for commercial purposes, helping them in the process.

The last visit – the consultant in Poland. It began on May 3 and lasted till May 7. Andreas Pöpke came to Poland with Eberhard Schneider. Summarized report can be found in the brochure, whereas its full

version is about to be published on our website

www.ptop.org.pl.

Feel free to read it.



Raketenwald - Dr Schneider and an industrial logging machine for private forest

Extensive use of grassland as a tool for environmental protection.

- Edyta Kapowicz PTOB

Semi-natural meadows and pastures in Europe is a habitat, which was developed as a result of human activity. Wetland meadows being a valuable habitat of native species of birds, plants and invertebrates, are often an important refuge of many endangered species. Maintenance of wetland meadows along with the richness of their flora and fauna is only possible through their agricultural utilization, which prevents the natural succession of trees and shrubs. The conservancy or increase of meadows biodiversity depends on these ecosystems management. Therefore a suitable choice of their usage, and often the restoration of meadow mowing, is very important. The main development method of extensively used grassland is mowing and grazing.

Mowing is an effective way to use wetland meadows for the protection of nature. What is important is the timing and frequency of mowing. These criteria should depend on the precious species of fauna and flora found in

Imszar peat bog



the area and the order of protection that is designated. While utilizing the grassland birds refuge of the Polish Society for Bird Protection we use two methods of mowing:

- **Early mowing** - June-July period, traditional, used in the conservation of such species as the Lesser Spotted Eagle, White Stork, who in order to feed their nestlings need low vegetation feeding ground where they can hunt prey,

- **Late mowing** - August - September, used in refuges of such species as the Corncrake, Aquatic Warbler, Black-Tailed Godwit, Great Snipe, Common Snipe, Redshank, is to allow this important species breeding successfully derived.

Hay should always be collected because leaving it fertilizes soil and promotes the formation of dense layers of dry plants. Regular removal of cut results in a gradual lowering of the nutrient content in soil.

Mieleszki – PTOB meadow



Another way to use the natural grasslands for nature conservation is grazing. This type of operation allows the structural diversity of vegetation and prevents the expansion of common weeds and arborescent plants. The effect of grazing depends on the type of animals used and the intensity of grazing. For larger areas, it is advantageous to use different

Mieleszki – Roman Kalski on a PTOB meadow



animals for grazing, since each species has distinct characteristics of grazing, which creates additional structural diversity. Most suitable for grazing in the wetland meadows are cows and horses. Traditional breeds, which were originally used in the given areas, should also be used. Cattle grazing supports the formation of clump grasslands, which are preferred by shore birds as their nesting sites.

In order to maintain and restore grazing in the Narew Valley PTOB purchased a few dozen traditional Polish Red breed cows

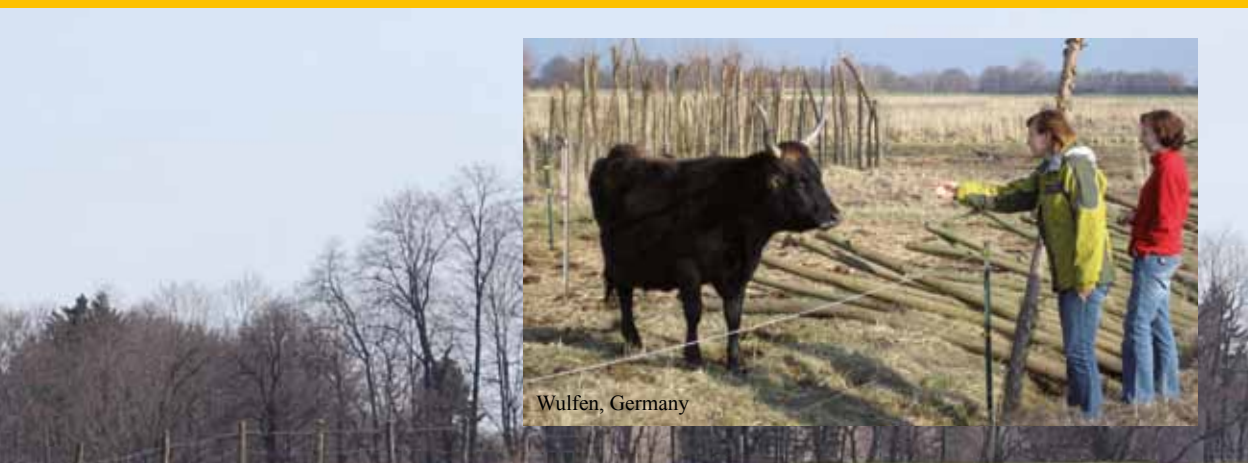
and giving them to farmers to use created about 10 cow herds of this breed. These cows are out grazing in the valley of Narwia PTOB bird refuges in places such as: Puchły (Upper Valley of Narew), Rogowo (Swamp Valley of Narew) or Tykocin (Tykocin Marsh). We have also introduced the first pieces of this race to the refuge in Brzostowo in Biebrza National Park. Many positive features typical of primitive races are characteristic of this race. These are: low fodder requirements, resistance to many diseases (including udder

inflammation), durability in harsh climatic conditions, high fertility and calving ease continued till old age (even up to 20 years). Low milk productivity of this breed is compensated by good milk quality. It contains a high percentage of dry substance, fat content (4,2-4,5%) and protein (3,3-3,6%), and is ideal for dairy processing (eg, the mozzarella cheese).

Grazing horses such as the Polish Konik horse is also well suited in wetland meadows. Polish Koniks are the only indigenous, primitive horse breed derived



Horses in Żywkowo



Wulfen, Germany



directly from the wild horses called Tarpan. They are extremely durable and perfectly suited to harsh conditions, such as grazing on vast areas of wetland meadows. Polish Koniks play an important role in the active protection of wildlife, serve as “living lawn mowers,” not allowing for overgrowing areas not exploited agriculturally yet but valuable from a natural point of view.

Animal stocking should be appropriately selected to the given area, because if too extensive it may cause damage to meadows and reduction of biodiversity. Generally, the stocking should not exceed 0.5 - 1 LU / ha (for example, large units is 1 cow = 1 LU). PTOB currently utilizes meadows in an area of approximately 350 ha and we lease a further 150 ha to farmers. We ourselves manage the 180 hectares of en-

ows are used in an optimal manner for the valuable bird species occurring in the refuge. Agricultural management on such a large area of land would not be possible without the cooperation of local

Rabinówna Reserve. Reed succession in the peat bog



our guidelines farmers mow the meadow, clear hay away and use it on their farms, and sometimes it's done as services provided to our Society. Another time, we pay for the mowing and hay is offered to farmers from the neighborhood. If only on the given area grazing is recommended and there are farmers interested in it we offer them such a meadow for their use.

Agricultural use of wetland meadows can bring mutual benefits for both farmers and the nature. Among others the intensification of farming is a threat to maintaining the traditional usage of these meadows. Therefore, extensive farming should be supported, for example through the promotion of subsidies on account of implementation of environmental programs.

The Wulfen Peat Bog - project presentation

-Andreas Wenk Primigenius gGmbH

The „Wulfen Peat Bog”, covering over 800 hectares, originates in the ice age (the Vistula and Solawa glaciations) functioning as a southern parallel waterspout of the lower basin of the Elbe mainstream and up to around 1856 it was a flood area (mudflat) of Elbe and Solawa. The land in the northern part of the Saxony-Anhalt district is considered a “major natural spatial entity” of the Elbe Basin Plains. The county amelioration ditch works as its drainage.

Due to the low level of groundwater from 0.3 to 0.8m below the ground and thus subject to conditions including changeable moisture with temporary flooding of often large areas till the beginning of the 70s of the last century, the peat bog wasn't used for agriculture like the upper surrounding field. The area is 52.0 to 53.0m above the sea level and there are virtually no slopes, which is explained by bifurcations and the smaller surface water motion reversion (eg, the Saufang Ditch).

It was achieved only after the extension and deepening of the district ditch. Therefore, by 1970 a large area of the Wulfen Peat Bog represented extensively utilized grassland with multiple mixed grasses (mainly mowing in both recent decades) in the environment predominantly used for agriculture. The current degree of threat to the river valley meadows (Cnidion)

Cnidio-Deschampsietum cespitosae 1 = ‘endangered’ (according to DIERSCHKE & BRIEMLE 2002: 199) shows the situation continues to exacerbate the state of this type of grassland and accurately determines their value.

More than 50 peat bog plant and animal species are protected in Germany under the Red Book of Endangered Species (Kornecka et al. 1996), Saxony-Anhalt (National Office... 2004), the EU Birds Directive (European Union 1979) and the 2nd Annex to the Habitat Directive (European Union 1992). Their numbers are still characterized by a downward trend. Some examples include: *Pelobates fuscus* – Spadefoot Toad, *Hyla arborea* – Tree Frog, *Gallinago gallinago* - Common Snipe, *Saxicola Rubetra* - Whinchat, *Asio flammeus* - Short-eared Owl, *Salix repens* - Creeping Willow, *Viola stagnina* – Fen Violet, *Centaureum pulchellum* – Branched Centaury,



Oranienburg - a military range land revitalized by animals

Cirsium canum - Gray Thistle, *Teucrium scordium* - Germander Garlic, *Scutellaria hastifolia* - Skullcap, etc.

The first intensification phase after the Second World War was characterized by intensive land reclamation (Biosphere Reserve-Homepage 2006): “From the 50s of the twentieth century, drainage facilities were more fully utilized.” Then in the early 70’s of the twentieth century further drainage works were carried out as ordered by the administration. As a result, the green gorge areas came to reducing the area of extensive multiple mixed grassland with changeable moisture content, and consequently the destruction of the



Oranienburg – cows fed with hay

state of shore birds who are nesting in the meadows. Before 1971 the area was an important area of grassland breeding sites for species such as *Numenius arquata* - Curlew (over 10 pairs), *Gallinago gallinago* - Common Snipe (almost 20 pairs), *Vanellus vanellus* - Lapwing (over 170 pairs), and others. However, the earlier increase in the intensification of meadows utilization associated with active meadows limitation led to decrease the state of species and their extinction. This applies to many species of ducks: *Lymnocyptes minimus* - a Little Snipe, *Philomachus pugnax* - Ruff and *Tringa totanus* - Redshank.

Changing the structures, landscaping and energy-consuming drainage and intensive summer damming of water allowed the remaining green areas intensification, as reflected in the doses of fertilizer - in case of nitrogen up to 150 kg/ha. Fortunately, however, intensive utilization significantly impeded the soil substrate heterogeneity and difficult energy-intensive drainage

of high water level and related periodic grassland areas flooding in some parts of the peat bog. Due to the protection of shore bird species sites and vegetation of wetlands four separate peat bog sectors were marked off on 03/17/1983 as a nature reserve with a total area of about 313 hectares, which in combination with the two existing "... plain nature monuments [, Wiesenmoor 'and , Strudellöchern '] served preserving endangered plant communities. "

The second phase of bog use intensification (intensive land improvement and pasture plowing), began around 1970, was not significantly alleviated even after the 1990. First of all the situation in the wetland meadows of the nature reserve

and beyond has not improved. For this reason, Köthen District Council of NABU decided in 1994 on the impact of the field holders/owners on the situation of water and land surfaces. Thus, since then by buying the land, the Council is trying to permanently change the state of the extensive management for its benefit in order to preserve or develop further muddy biotopes of land, grassland with changeable humidity in large areas. The project is substantially supported by the Vogelschutz-Komitee e.V. and other environmental protection associations. Then the idea of the area's self-development was pushed, hand in hand with the plan to cancel the reserve division and develop it into "an biotype ally". The



Wulfen – a cow intrigued by visitors

transformation of the soil into cultivated pastures was also partially successful

Since 1999, the Köthen District Council of NABU is carrying out a restoration plan for Wulfen Peat Bog, initially in the area of 13 ha, today expanded to 120 hectares. It seeks to restore near-natural state of water management impaired by intensive agriculture. Linked to this is possibly It is associated with the reconstruction of wetland meadows preservation with strong fluctuations of the groundwater, providing habitat for many endangered animal and plant species, because even the expanded up to 577 hectares nature reserve the Wulfen Peat Bog pastures are not usually preserved in good condition.

Another goal of this initiative is the multi-method work on a possibly low cost level, not only in harmony with nature, but also environmentally friendly. In addition to minimizing the necessary transportation it generally means management extension. Energy consumption and the total costs can be further reduced because the moors project does not concern agricultural land, but pastures and possibly grassland. As a result, an idea arose of the constant year-round farm animals breeding, whose task would be the landscape care, and simultaneous use of these animals. In relation to the often practiced intensive animals breeding the effects are amazing. Starting from:

- Reduced environmental burden



by spreading foreign substances such as dust, nitrogen (minor nitrate leaching), ammonia (NH₃), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide as greenhouse gases, drugs and by-product substances of animal fodder, lack of phosphates rinsing ;

- By soil conservation and adapting to its use: compact turf protects the soil against the negative erosion effects, enriches it in a high-humus, and humus accumulation causes nitrogen fixation;

- Maintaining an almost closed circulation of the substance;

- Environment compatible aftermath use (as opposed to the so-called typical landscape care, which due to the clippings mass care is permanently dependent on subsidy, and causes the problem of waste disposal);

- The total abandonment of the introduction of high-energy food (industrial), which require constant fertilizer and high energy input;

- Minimizing the need for transportation (animals, excrement, fodder harvesting, transport, storage and maintenance) - at the very low total workload (without stable works et al.)

- Significant effect of nature conservation;
- Healthy and maintained according to animal species, providing healthy meat;
- Create and maintain employment in the ecologically-oriented agriculture;
- Significantly reduced technical spending (lack of stable equipment, irrigation cost reduction, lack of building development, low level of funding for transport equipment and harvesting aftermath etc.).

NABU submitted the above project in accordance with extensive nature laws for year-round maintenance of grassland by grazing animals and maintenance (aurochs, “wild” horses) to the Primigenius Ltd company, being the sole shareholder of it. Currently over 40 cows and 14 horses (Przewalski’s horse, Exmoor pony) stand there at 120 hectares, and use and cultivate the surface all year round. Until now, mainly thanks to the efforts of the Vogelschutz-Komitee e.V. more than 150 hectares were acquired. The most important are the arable areas,

to be transformed into pastures and connect the two existing parts of the nature reserve, and low-lying grassland, recovered from intensive management. Primary objectives of the project as the establishment of richly structured extensive pastures with landscape management by grazing animals to maintain and protect grassland birds complement the accompanying enhanced land re-hydration ordinance.

Oranienburg – cows



Protection of habitats in the refugia of the Polish Society for Birds Protection (PTOP) refugia exemplified by the buffer zone of the Narew National Park

-Anna Suchowolec PTOP

PTOP as the first NGO on the country scale has initiated the purchase and lease of land in



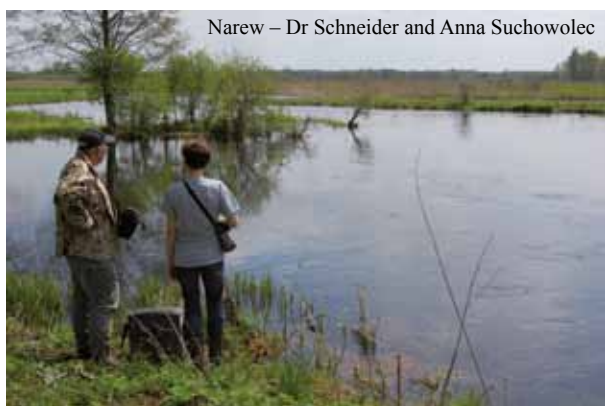
Narew River, fault ledge in Rogowo (hidden underwater)

order to create bird refugia. Our aim is to restore those especially precious habitats, maintain the unique characteristics of flooding river valleys - breeding and feeding grounds for many endangered birds as well as those verging on extinction. In the year 1990, that is before the creation of the Biebrza National Park, we bought 7 hectares of Carex lands in the Biebrza valley. This is how was created Poland's first social bird refugium called „Wodniczka”.

One of our oldest refugia, where we have been performing our works for over 15 years is the so-called buffer zone of the Narew National Park. The refugium is located within the area of the Swampy Narew Valley (the Polish acronym is BDN). It is a fragment of the valley formed

by a network of many riverbeds of irregular layout, which may serve as an example of Europe's

only anastomosing river system. The area's most significant natural asset is precisely this unique character of the Narew in a given segment. The refugium itself occupies the northern part of the swampy valley covering the area of around 13.4 square kilometres, namely the territory from the Rzędziany-Pańki dyke to the bridge in the village of Żółtki. The buffer zone used to be a typical swampy val-



Narew – Dr Schneider and Anna Suchowolec

ley up until the end of the 1970s. The valley's unique hydrological system, which is expressed mainly in the long-term flooding

and intensive permeation with ground water, was, however, disturbed in the 1980s as a result of river channelization performed. Straightening the riverbed, its widening and deepening as well as cutting off numerous oxbows between Rzędziany and Żółtki have caused accelerated outflow in the river, radical changes to the environment through drastic lowering of water levels in the river and the adjacent areas. Intensive agricultural utilization of these lands followed. Ceasing the extensive economy in this area has caused the evanescence of convenient habitats for feeding and breeding of water and marsh birds. An expression of the degradation level are the results of research into the area's breeding avifauna. In the years 1979/81, that is before the end of chan-

nelization works one found in the valley and in the area adjoining the valley the existence of 149 breeding birds species, however, the research conducted in the year 1994 mentions the mere 81 species, whose nesting was certain, probable or possible. In the years 1993-99, thanks to

the financial support from the EuroNatur foundation (www.euronatur.org), PTOB bought 431 hectares in the buffer zone. First re-naturalization works were initiated even before the establishing of the Narew National Park in 1995. They began with the construction of a dam on the oxbow at the place where it is joined with the artificial riverbed, which resulted in the elevation of water level of the area covering around 80 ha. Subsequent works on the dam made it possible for the water to be directed into the dried-up oxbow. In the years 1996-2001 one performed purification of the oxbows both mechanically and manually in the lands belonging to the following villages:

Pańki, Rzędziany, Rogowo and Majątek Rogowo. The purification process consisted in removing blockages: shrubs, slime, shallowing, reed beds, rot-wood and its fragments. These works made it possible for the water to be channelled into the side, natural river arms. A further activity was to repair the Rzędziany-Pańki dyke. 2 transfers were built which enabled the natural flow of melt-water. Pipe culverts of small inside diameter were replaced with wooden crossing bridges of inside diameter ensuring proper flow. The bridges were located over the three reconstructed arms of the Narew oxbow, which enabled the flow of water through the dyke and

partly reconstructing the network of riverbeds which once existed in the given area. The flow opening facilitates the filling and activating of oxbows through elevation of river levels with the use of threshold structures on the Narew and channelling some part of the flow into the mentioned oxbows.

Further activities included the construction of two stone thresholds on the artificial riverbed of Narew. The necessity of making the two thresholds resulted from the need for maintaining high water levels above the dyke, that is within the borders of the Narew National Park.

In the year 2007, one built the first of the two planned thresholds, located at the level



of Radule settlement. In February 2010 the construction of the second of the two planned thresholds on the Narew river was completed - below the joint between the old and new (channelized) riverbed on the lands belonging to the village of Pańki. Taking into the consideration the fact that the threshold, which was built in 2007 on the Narew at the level of the Radule settlement, influences the part of the valley on the river's right bank, it is only the second structure which is to make the control of water flow exiting the Narew National Park towards the whole area of the buffer zone appear like it used to in the period before the channelization of the Narew.

Elevation of the valley's water level is favourable to reed bed species, however, it is not sufficiently improving the nesting conditions of water and marsh birds. Shrubbery spreading towards the marsh habitats has a negative influence on the area's natural assets; furthermore, another unfavourable phenomenon is discontinued utilization which leads to overgrowth of open areas. Overgrowth of flood-meadows leads to leads to the decrease in the value of floodplain for the endangered shore bird species, this is the reason why as part of re-naturalization works one also performs meadow restoration. It is a laborious and complex process to restore devalued habitats. Hewn shrubbery grows again

very quickly, so it is necessary to perform a systematic removal of shrubbery preventing the appearance of shoots. Gradual uncovering of the surface through consistent cutting of shrubbery, as well as keeping the area free from roots and regular yearly mowing in order to prevent the shrubbery from resurfacing have a profound importance for the attempts at preventing shrubbery from spreading (which causes the decrease in the area's natural assets). As part of the re-naturalization scheme one has been consistently restoring more and more hectares of meadows. Last major works took place in 2008; it was then that one commenced re-utilization of 30 ha of meadows in the vicinity of the Ruszczyń village. One removed individual shrubs and minor clusters, which made it possible for open areas (allocated to mowing) to be uncovered. In the implementation of the task, one focused mainly upon removal of shrubbery from the so-called mineral *Carpinetum Betuli*, constituting (in inundation periods) islets elevated over the surface of water—places which are suitable for nesting of shore birds. The area levelling was performed with the use of an excavator. Stumps and roots were grubbed out and then a one-meter-deep pit was dug in a given place, where rotwood was placed and buried. Such preparation of the area is the renewed mowing after many

years of non-utilization. It is necessary to point out to the fact that the mere removal of shrubbery caused the following species to settle within a given area: 2 pairs of Lapwings, 2 pairs of Corncrakes and 1 pair of Montagu's Harrier; during the autumn migration one observed Short-eared Owl. The following breeding birds have returned to the meadow: Lapwings, Redshanks, Black-tailed Godwits, Common Snipes. Furthermore, year by year, the meadow is becoming a more-and-more interesting place of rest and foraging for water and marsh birds during migration, in the present season, the following birds foraging were spotted: Wood Sandpipers, Ruffs, Jack Snipes and Green Sandpipers in flights.

It is a laborious and complex process to restore devalued habitats. The re-naturalization works have been going on for 15 years non-stop thanks to the financial support provided by many sponsors and thanks to intense involvement of people connected with the project. The example of the buffer zone located in the Narew National Park proves that it is very easy to devastate precious habitats. It also shows that one must incur incomparably high labour and financial costs in order to simply come closer to the state from before the channelization, as the complete return is already impossible.

Ziegeunerwäldchen (Gypsy Forest)

Development of the Nature Reserve and its surroundings

- Thomas Maschke Vogelschutz - Biotop-Management-Initiative e.V.

Nature Reserve Ziegeunerwäldchen (Gypsy Forest) is located within the lowland area of the river Haller, in the district of Eldgasen, in a small town Springe. It was once a place where clay was mined. At the beginning of the 20th century clay mining was discontinued,

were almost entirely converted into farmland.

Following the purchase, the landscape – almost completely stripped of trees – was slowly becoming enriched, shaped and planted. Hedgerows and willows were planted. Diggers and tracked vehicles were used to

introduced for the purpose of regulating the so-called “violation of landscape” in the area. These agreements made it possible for Biotop-Management-Initiative to take over the execution of all the directives and to guarantee a permanent protection. In 2003 the third association appeared on the scene – the Vogelschutz-Komitee e.V., which gave the project chance for further development.

dug up first water reservoirs. When the first directives were implemented, numbers of plant and animal species began to grow steadily. These successes are best exemplified by fully



Thomas Maschke discussing his project

and the area was first filled with debris, then converted into forest and finally abandoned.

NABU (The Union for Nature Conservation), which was once known as the Union for the Protection of Birds, bought 9 hectares of land for the purpose of environmental protection. In 1986, the area was granted nature reserve status, and small plots of land were being successively bought in the region. These plots were usually converted from cultivated areas into manicured meadows. In 1960s the pastures were still used across the lowland. As a result of intensified soil improvement, the pastures

documented world of birds in the area. At first, there were 42 species, but up to 2002, 91 species were recorded. The project is financed with NABU subventions, as well as with the resources from the foundation and the public sector. Numerous volunteers made it possible to set up in 2002 Biotop-Management-Initiative, which – by means of land purchase - significantly speeds up the process of enlarging the reserve. The area was considerably enlarged with the introduction of the directive on land compensation. It was in-

Environmental protection department manages about 50 out of 80 hectares of total area and tries to incorporate further plots. From the viewpoint of a specialist environmental protection organization, first it is important to convert plots from being agriculturally productive into plots that are used in accordance with the rules of environmental protection, it is vital to renaturalize water balance, to optimize or regulate the periods of time when the overflowing water from Haller, a small local stream, as well as precipitation water remains in the area.



Ziegeunerwäldchen – wildlife refuge in the agricultural landscape

It is also essential to irrigate typical elements of the lowlands biotope, which depends on high level of ground waters. In order for this task to be successful, drainage devices have to be removed, the same has to be done with numerous irrigation ditches and the whole drainage system. Much has been done recently, e.g. thousands of metres of drainage have been dismantled and closed. In order not to come into

above have a decisive influence on the diversity of species. In addition, nests in different forms are installed, e.g. nesting boxes for sparrows and kingfishers.

In accordance with the rule “The more diversified the landscape, the wealthier the fauna”, we were able to restore numerous species to their natural habitat. Nowadays, 115 bird species from all over the world can be spotted, including a great number of endangered species, e.g. Northern Hobbies, Short-eared Owls, Garganey, Cranes, Snipes, Corncrakes, Whinchats, River Warblers and Kingfishers. Every year new species appear in the area, and their habitat and growing numbers prove the value of the area, and that our work towards environmental protection is not in vain. Obviously, it also refers to other specimen of flora and fauna.

Keeping nurturing of fields on high, professional level that meet the requirements of

Panorama



environmental protection is decisive for the future. Constant changes in agriculture and other aspects of our lives are not only an important challenge, but also a chance to implement new strategies for environment, for animals and plants.

In the long-term perspective, this and other, similar projects have to become self-sufficient. Profits coming from the activity, as well as from selling the products of the project, have to be used to create a mechanism that will in future cover all the expenses. For this purpose, we can have nature itself as a teacher.



Bird booths

conflict with agricultural economy in the area, such actions have to be taken only within the area of huge landed estates.

The second instrument that is important to achieve a higher level of biodiversity is land inventorying. For this purpose, we planted hedges, brushwood, orchards, willows, bushes, we also renovated numerous bodies of water and fallows. Diversified nurturing of green areas, from sheep and cattle pasturage, through alternating harvesting and pasturage, with the longest cultivation rhythm possible, to scything small areas – all of the



1. Goats shaping the landscape contribute to an increase of biodiversity

Żywkowo stork village- Piotr Hryszko PTOF

Żywkowo(54°22'16.535"N, 20°35'32.783"E) – a small village in the eastern Polish Old Prussian Lowland. Administratively it is the Górowo Haweckie municipality in the district of Bartoszyce, Warmia-Mazury province. The position is located in the area of Natura 2000, the Special Bird Protection Area SPA called “Warmia Refuge” PLB280015 (up to 2007 SPA Warmia Storks “).

Access

Żywkowo is situated at the Polish - Russian border. NOTE: The Crossing of the Russian-Polish border except from the crossing points is strictly forbidden. The largest city in the area is Olsztyn, approximately 80km away. Coming from Olsztyn one should take the 51st National Road heading toward Lidzbark Warminski. In Lidzbark Warminski one should turn left into the provincial road number 511 in the direction of Górowo Haweckie. Górowo Haweckie should be passed driving North on 511 Road. About 11 km away from Górowo Haweckie there will an exit on the left marked with a white board Żywkowo. 500 meters away there is a visitors parking lot.

History of the Village

Village of Prussian origin, formerly known as Sewek. Destroyed and depopulated dur-

while in 1928 it had 54 residents. According to data from 1983, the village consisted of 14 buildings and was inhabited by 118 people. In 1999 – it was only 40 peo-

Cowshed in Żywkowo



ing the Polish-Teutonic wars. It disappeared after the Thirteen Years' War. Mentioned again in 1785 as a royal village of 6 houses. In 1821, the village had 44

ple. Currently (2010) 30 people. After the Second World War instead of the displaced German residents settlers of Ukrainian origin were brought - the 1947 “Wisła”

action. Descendants of the settlers have been living here till today. In 2000 the village and municipality of Górowo Iławeckie, with the Greek Catholic community's support founded and built a Greek Catholic chapel located in the center of the village, in the

Description of the Village

The road pattern village, situated in a valley stream, with preserved traditional buildings habitats. Houses and most of the farm buildings are built of red brick. Buildings most-

by meadows and pastures, between which broad rich boundary strips, ditches, streams, ponds, woodlands midfields. Meadows and pastures are mowed or grazed annually, which is conducive to the protection of the white stork feeding areas. The terrain is hilly with overheights of even more than 10m.

In 1998, approximately 1 km away east from the village, 'Grądzik' was established, an ecological area of 87.02 hectares. The purpose of its establishment was to provide the food base for the storks. Part of the area is leased by the Polish Birds Protection Society and mowing is done for their own needs, without jeopardizing the birds and other animals inhabiting the meadow.

Avifauna

Żywkowo Stork Village is a place where the White Stork population levels more than twice the size of humans. 30 people live here, and every spring about 70 storks arrive when they live to have their offspring there is twice as much or even more. In villages with an area of approximately 3 acres there are 44 inhabited nests and several platforms for setting up new outlets, most of which as many as 24 nests on the farm are owned by the Polish Society of Birds Protection. The stay of the white storks is most interesting between spring and late summer (late March - half of August). In the period of April - mid-May,



place where a cross stood before.

ly covered with ceramic tiles. Żywkowo area is dominated by extensive farming. Farms are small, usually a dozen or so ha. The neighborhood is dominated

you may experience a particularly spectacular battle for the nests. The second half of May is a period when chicks begin to appear and undergo a period of upbringing for about two months. The next show in the Stork Village is a flying lesson in the second half of July. The last chance for storks observation appears in August, which is also a spectacular one. Before departures Storks gather in meadows and fields in large numbers, even about 40-50 birds and more.

Besides the white stork in Żywkowo village area one can observe other birds associated with extensive agriculture, ponds and inter-field afforestation such as Gray and Yellow Wagtail, Lapwing, Goldfinch, Great Grey Shrike, Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Black Redstart, Magpie. Barn Swallows nest at farms in large numbers, mainly inside farm buildings, and both the Barn and House Swallows outside. Partridges can be observed in the meadows with wide boundary strips, and during harvest (mid August) also on the mown crops. Żywkowo is surrounded by numerous ponds, and opposite the village entrance there is a small pool, a great place to see the Mallards, Widgeons, Coots, Mute Swans and Herons. In the surrounding area Cranes can be found in fields and meadows around the village and there are a lot of Crane tooting grounds. Cuckoo can often be heard as well as the rarely observed corncrake. Corncrakes are best heard late in

the evenings, at dusk and just before dawn. The village has a lot of small orchards and gardens, where you can see the Starlings and Jay. Open areas surrounding Żywkowo are conducive to predators, of which most commonly seen are the Common Buzzard and the Goshawk (allegedly a Marsh Harrier as well, but I have not seen one myself).

PTOP's cooperation with residents

PTOP's work in Żywkowo is an excellent example of partnership activities with the residents. In 1998, there lived about 40 people in Żywkowo, while in the spring about 40 Stork pairs arrived for many years. That was when people first heard about North-Podlasiian Society for Bird Protection. And this is how it began. With the Eco-Fund's support a lookout was raised here, which, despite old age still stands today and allows spying on Stork life. There were five operating farms in the village at that time. Those were small not very productive farms. Buildings were old and worn, and such a vast number of Stork nests (at least 2 to even 5) on a single roof to weaken them even more. In order to protect the breeding sites

of these birds PTOp's activities as part of the GEF/SGP Grant Program at that time consisted of roof renovation and setting nest platforms on the roofs. Both the residents and the storks were pleased with such cooperation as seen in retrospect. However, before entering the European Union Polish agriculture began experiencing crisis - particularly very small farms - such as those in Żywkowo. Abandonment of farming activities would mean the loss of excellent stork feeding ground. Therefore PTOp be-

House in Żywkowo



gan one of the largest projects called : "Protection of the White Stork feeding areas around the largest breeding colonies in Podlasie and Warmia". As part of this project (funded by Eco-Fund) thanks to the efforts of our

Society farmers received a few cows, milk tanks, some small but very useful agricultural equipment (mowers, paving brick press, rake). These actions prevented the collapse of agriculture.

PTOP becomes a farmer in Żywkowo

At the beginning of 2000, one of the few Żywkowo farmers reached retirement age and had no successors, who would assume the farm. At that

two institutions acting jointly bought a farm number 7 and adjacent arable land and meadows. All this in order to preserve the agricultural character of the village. The farm operates till today and is also the information and education center now. Currently, in addition to the PTOP farm in Żywkowo two other farms operate there, one of which has no livestock. Farms do not have much production capacity, and therefore more rented or used land is abandoned by farmers. A few years ago abandoned land was purchased by pseudo-

farmers and restructured for afforestation, which led to increasing impoverishment of stork feeding areas. Thanks to the our Society's intervention afforestation has been suspended for about a year, but unfortunately succession fell on the abandoned land, causing their over-

growing vegetation and woody shrubs. PTOP tries to redeem the "written off" land and use it as farmland as much as possible. The number of wastelands is still growing and purchasing and utilizing more land for agriculture

is becoming increasingly difficult. We are limited by the state of the buildings (adjustment to the existing legislation), capacity of these buildings, because the larger area of land is associated with an increase in animal populations. In addition, another factor impeding the good maintenance of stork feeding areas is the lack of specialized agricultural equipment.

Volunteers for the nature of Żywkowo

Maintenance of areas around the country in due order is hard with the present state of our farm and equipment. Therefore, the Society organizes volunteer efforts. The recently carried out ones include, among other things, "topping willows" - the action was aimed at saving overgrown willows from toppling, and the preservation of traditional old Polish countryside. This action resulted in an additional surprising effect, as local farmers followed our lead in the fields and topped some of their own willows in the fields and boundary strips. Another one was "the pasture fencing action". Due to the lack of adequate quantity of equipment and staff we invited volunteers to help us with the fence of our newly acquired land. It was one of the largest shares, which gathered twelve nature lovers. In the future we want to mobilize local farmers and residents of neighboring villages to actively participate in our efforts and maybe



time, our company started its cooperation with Danone, who wanted to engage in nature protection activities, and in particular the white Stork protection. Therefore, in 2004 those

invite the local authorities' cooperation.

PTOP farm today...

Our farm is very old, most of the buildings are almost 200 years and were not seriously renovated so far (except for the barn roof repair under the GEF/SGP Grant Program). Therefore, using the EcoFund support we have made a very detailed barn renovation (keeping its original appearance). Also from the same source a manure platform was renovated and in the near future a purchase and assembly of manure containers is planned, in order to bring the farm to the existing EU-wide standards. Our observation tower and educational room repair work is also at the stage of completion. It is done in collaboration with the Society's Foundation of CEMEX.

PTOP grows native breeds

In addition to the ornithological attractions, you can see Polish horses in Żywkowo. This horse race was founded in the nineteenth century from the last living tarpans (wild horses) crossing with a domestic horse. They live at the PTOP farm in conditions resembling their natural environment, though with little human interference. Horses are very nice, very quiet and get used to people easily. Our herd consists of four adult mares

(Timur, Jelonek, Tropinka and Niedzica) and the young: one year old stallions Tenar and Nestor and a young mare called Jastarnia. In April of the current year the herd was joined by the eighth horse – Traktorek, son of Timura. Besides PTOP farm is engaged in conservative rearing of the Polish Red cattle. This breed comes from the small short-horned wild animals (in fact, they have large horns), living in the eastern part of Central Europe and Scandinavia. Polish Red cattle is characterized by high resistance and good health, longevity, very good fertility, light deliveries, long life and ease of calf rearing, as well

as high biological value of milk. Excellent adaptation of cattle to the harsh environmental conditions, indiscriminate selection of feed, the ability to reduce the efficiency that allows survival of seasonal shortages of feed, as well as fairly quickly regenerate lost condition are of highest importance to our farm. Currently the basic herd consists of 9 and 15 offspring heifers and a young bull. In March this year one of our heifers found a guardian - Eberhard Schneider, who named her Katerina and supports us in maintaining it.



Horse in Żywkowo

The future of PTOF forming activity in Żywkowo

After the recent land purchases in early 2010, we own about 39.04 ha of agricultural land and 37.69 ha in the village area, we lease (the leased land is located on the ecological premises of Grądzik). Part of our share of land is leased to local farmers. What we possess is fully sufficient to feed our animals. However, there are areas that are not used and therefore do not appear to be attractive to the storks. It would be worth it to buy and bring it back

to shape and thus increase the animal population. In the near future we plan renovations of the building belonging to us and aligning the farm barn (at least partially) to existing legislation.

Maintaining the agricultural activity the Society bears high costs of basic agricultural work. We would like to change it by purchasing the necessary farm equipment (tractor, hay press, plow, harrow, trailer, etc.).

To preserve the beautiful white stork breeding colonies of Żywkowo we must care about our farm, develop it and support local farmers. Such activities, nature education and cooperation will assist to maintain feeding and stork breeding places will make future generations enjoy these fascinating birds not only in photographs and old movies.



PTOP at Warmia and Mazury – few words on important bird areas

-Sebastian Menderski PTOP

In the year 2001, PTOP organization set up the Regional Office in Olsztyn, taking as its goal the protection of Warmia and Mazury area. Ever since, many projects e.g. the protection of Eurasian Crane, the pond turtle, the high moor and the bird's reserve have been accomplished. All of previously started programs have their continuation at present time. At this point I would like to concentrate on the protection of the bird's reserve. PTOP has directed its attention towards waterland birds, since the species are the most vulnerable to climate change. The two regions: Kwiecewo and Sątopy-Samulewo gained their unique values thanks to human interference and they now need their protection to survive.

Kwiecewo

The town of Kwiecewo is situated about 30 km north-west from Olsztyn. At the village's margins there is a small (about 120ha) Waterland area, which outstanding ornithological values make it one of the most important bird's places in Warmia and Mazury. The area of today's backwater, became the place of human interference, over 100 years ago. At the time, owing to the German policy, many wetlands have been drained to be converted to pasture. In 1907 drainage ditches and a pump station have been dug. In its best years, Kwiecewo fulfilled its previous role, however the

regular pumps have been exchanged by the electric ones. After the splitting of PGR, the regular mowing has been given up, and at the same time, various Wetland birds came to settle at the area. This way, one of the most precious nesting and breeding sites of Warmia and Mazury, have been brought back to life. Through the past few years, the researches of the polder Kwiecewo have shown that among the dynamic nesting group, the wetland birds are the dominant one. Every year, the three gull species come here to nest: Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (about 130 couples), Black Tern *Chlidonias Niger* (about 37 couples), White-winged Tern (about 3 couples). It happens that common Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* come and join the flock (up to 250 couples). Wetlands provide vital feeding and resting areas for many other migrating birds that visit each year: Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* (up to 3 couples), Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (up to 4 couples), Earwigs *Podiceps nigricollis* (up to 30 couples), various ducks: Gadwalls *Anas strepera* (up to 20 couples), Greenheads *Anas platyrhynchos* (up to 7 couples), Common Teals *Anas crecca* (up to 2 couples), Garganeys *Anas querquedula* (up to 2 couples), European Shovelers *Anas clypeata*.

In common reeds, Bitterns *Botaurus Stelaris* (up to 3 couples) and Little Bitterns

Ixobrychus minutus (up to 2 couples) build their nests. Furthermore, Eurasian Cranes *Grus grus*, Spotted Crakes *Porzana Porzana*, Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* and Common Coots *Fulica Atra* (up to 25 couples) come here with their offspring. The area around the backwater attracts Common Snipes *Gallinago gallinago*, Corncrakes *Crex crex* and Lapwings *Vanelus vanellus*. One can also find claw birds, which are represented by Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* (up to 4 couples) and sporadically Montagu's Harrier *Circus Pygargus*. Together, 53 bird species have been noted, that makes the region unique on a European scale. The list of nesting birds and fleeting birds comes up to 110 species. Apart from various birds, Kwiecewo is also a habitual residence of bats and a place of reproduction of large amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates. However, this amazing place may soon disappear. Some of the landowners insist on drying the land for conversion to farmland or urban development. The flooding concerns only a small area of pastureland, but in order for the farmers to be content, the whole area of 120 ha would have to be dried! One solution would be to ransom the area. In this situation, PTOP organization has started a campaign in aid of saving Kwiecewo.

Its aim is to repurchase the flooded pastureland and in a few years time, adapt the dynamics of water level and use the land only for the birds needs. It is absolutely essential to stop the runoff of nutrients from neighboring agricultural lands throughout transforming them into rough grazing. Additionally, the urgent need of the area is to restrain the expansion of overgrown willow, which for the past few years have been growing up. Presently, the willow expansion takes an early stage and therefore restraining it from further growing does not require an enormous input. It would also be advisable to limit the growth of Common reeds, as it disallows the Gulls and Grebes to nest.

In the year 2009, one of the PTOB workers initiated an action to "Save Kwiecewo". That is an interesting example of activating the whole society. Since the last year, over 70 people and institutions have given their contribution for repurchasing the lands. 140 000 PLN has been raised until the end of April 2001. Among the organizations which helped there were non-governmental organizations, nursery schools and health centers. Increasingly, people are becoming aware of the need to protect and help the environment. Let's hope, this new trend will develop in the future and that the non-governmental organizations will gain a wider support from the society as far as the protection of natural environment is concerned.

Sątopy-Samulewo

Situated about 65km north-east from Olsztyn. Nearby one can find a precious, in terms of ornithological values, area. The backwater is situated in place of the previous lake Sajno – the lake that has been dried for agricultural reasons. There used to be waterlogged meadows that underwent an intensive process of drying with the usage of the special pumps. Once the concepts of drying were discarded, the place filled up with water and at the same time friendly conditions have been created for bird nesting. The eastern part of the area is filled with reeds while the western part is covered with low growers. With the low water level the aquatic plants grow in abundance. They thrive in the central part of the land with the predominance of the Knotweed *Polygonum amphibium*. Countless reed islands create comfortable conditions for nesting of Waterfowl.

Presently, protective tasks in the way of ichthyofauna are being pursued. Their aim is to eliminate the Silver crucian carp *Carrassius gibelio* – the heterologous species in Polish ichthyofauna - as it is a kind of competitor for the native species. Therefore, the polder is emptied every two years in fall –winter term so that the fish are safely removed from the polder, and at the final stage the place is refilled with water again. At the same time, widespread areas of mud lure thousands of birds during their Fall migration. The aggregations of birds exceed 15000,

with the predomination of Lapwing and Pacific golden plover.

The polder constitutes a perfect place for Wetland birds, which number during Fall migration estimates 33 000. In the time of migration 3 000 Eurasian Cranes concentrate at one place. What is more, many other migratory species choose the place for their reserve: Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* (2 500), White-fronted Goose *A. albifrons* (4 500), Greylag Goose *A. anser* (3 000). Apart from goose herds, large numbers of other birds species have been observed: Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* (3 200), Wigeons *Anas penelope* (2 283), Greenwings *Anas crecca* (730), Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* (419), Pochards *Aythya ferina* (350), Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* (240), Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* (219), Common Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* (210), Cerelews *Numenius arquata* (181), Mew Gulls *Larus canus* (180), Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* (115), Coots *Fulica atra* (110), Common Pintails *Anas acuta* (70) and Shovelers *Anas clypeata* (68). What is also worth mentioning is a concentration of Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* with flocks up to 6 500 and Lapwing *Valnellus Valnellus* up to 8 000 birds. The polder is also a place of settlement for migrating Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* (218) and Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* (63).

However, the main problem of the area is the dominance of Silver Crucian Carp, which percentage constitutes 98 % of all species. This non-specific species have been brought to Europe by human. It came to Sątopy-Samulewo in a natural way (most probably by the river Sajno and on the bird's feet). The Silver crucian carp put in jeopardy our native species. Since the year 2005 the polder is drained every year by Fall and all the fish are taken from the polder. The statistics from the 2009 show that 74 750 fish have been fished out. The complement of ichthyofauna was as follows:

- Silver Crucian Carp – 74 000 kg,
- Pike – 300 kg,
- Lin – 450 kg,
- others – Crucians, Perches, Roaches, Ides.

The average weight of Silver crucian carp in the next few years structured as follows:

- 2005 – 33g,
- 2006 – 80g,
- 2008 – 100g,
- 2009 – 120g.

As it can be seen, the average weight of Silver crucian carp is growing, most probably thanks to enlargement in food supply and nesting capability of the place. On the other hand, the fishing out does not guarantee for the whole population to be removed from the polder. Therefore, conducting it on a

regular basis is crucial for the survival of native fish. If the Silver crucian carps were to successfully establish themselves in the area of Sątopy-Samulewo they could utterly disrupt the existing ecosystem, potentially starving out other native fish. In case of the polder Sątopy this could end up in dying of the fish and water contamination. In the year 2009, thanks to the improvement of the fishing-out method, about 90% of Silver crucian carp population was removed. Another way of dealing with the invasive Silver Crucian carp is to put young Pikes into the polder in order to intensify the effect of predatory. However, there is a risk that the Silver crucian carp will eat the young Pikes population. As it can be seen, we need a few more years of experience to revamp the method.

Another risk for the polder's wildlife is created by the density of aquatic vegetation. The reeds and rushes enable the birds nesting, therefore it is important to remove the plants and transport them beyond the polder's bounds.

In order to help the Crane's settlement, the PTOP, has repaired the old pump construction in order to control the water levels according to bird's needs. Hydrants have been modernized and the clarifiers for liquid manure have been removed. Thanks to the improvements, the liquids escaping from the clarifiers are no longer contaminating the polder.

Presently, 30 ha of

meadows surrounding the polder are taken under lease hold by PTOP organization. The meadows are being lease hold from the Mazurski Landscape Park and they are mowed on a regular basis in order to create new feeding areas for the Wetland birds.

Further removing of the reeds, creating pebble islands and restoring the breeding places for Gulls – are some of the future anticipated projects. It is worth mentioning that all of the project implementation is done with the cooperation with the University Warminsko-Mazurski and the Department of Fishing Industry.

The Zarth : Silent zone not only for wild animals

-Dr. Eberhardt Schneider Vogelschutz - Komitee e.V.

Near the town of Treuenbrietzen, ca. 70 kilometres to the south-west of Berlin, near the edge of the Baruth Valley and in the middle of a large protected area that has been newly established according to the project entitled "The Ecological Corridor of South Brandenburg", there is an exceptional area of riparian forest called "Der Zarth". According to the will of its present

course of adaptive evolutionary adjustment of all organisms living there and for their biocenoses. A development of fauna and flora should take place there in optimal conditions while the natural genetic potential as genetic resources is obtained and the "wild area" as much as possible similar to the natural conditions is created. Due to the functions of the riparian forest, that is a huge basin for

from several springs forms small streams that cross the Zarth forest. A small lake was created on peat layers that had been placed there earlier. There are two forest forms that are very rare in Brandenburg now. Alder and Ash forest covers low and humid parts of the Zarth. Upper and drier areas are covered by oak and hornbeam forest. The present state of the trees is the



Cranes in the Nuthe Nieplitz Nature Park Fot. Katrin Greiser

owner, an NGO that has bought this area from Treuenbrietzen Commune for its own good and not for the purpose of earning financial benefits from it, it should be protected as „a wild area”.

This area, as natural reserve, is to be preserved for the future natural and undisturbed development of biodiversity in the

carbon dioxide, it seems reasonable to resign from wood production and thanks to this contribute to the protection of the climate.

A characteristic feature of this forest reserve covering 280 hectares is an exceptional alternation of forests, brushwood, meadows, swamps, marshes and open water areas. Water flowing

secondary forest. Like almost everywhere in Central Europe, it is not a primary forest. The current state developed as a result of natural succession after the end of its anthropogenic use that lasted for centuries. In order to excavate peat, the alder and beach forest was grubbed

up. Areas that were not covered with peat were dehydrated and used as forest meadows. Grazing pigs, horses, cattle or sheep contributed to a transformation of the forest into wood pastures, which is now proven by the plant forms of old oaks that are typical for this type of forest. Grubbing up of the forest stopped in the early 20th century. Today's forest areas have grown in the course of further succession and are the result of natural reforestation.

A mosaic of different habitats gave birth to a biodiversity that is worth noticing both from botanic and zoological perspectives. There are no similar ones in the vicinity. Both rare and common bird species in the area find their living space here. Now 92 species of breeding birds live in the Zarth, from Common Kingfisher, Turtle Dove, Crane, Meadow Pipit and Woodcock and finally to Black Stork. Almost half of them are species whose living space is not related to the forest. Contrary to "typical" forest birds they should be treated as birds living in open spaces, that is species finding their habitats in the outskirts of forests or on meadows. Including numerous species of migrating birds, the presence of 150 bird species in the Zarth was confirmed. Moreover, there are rare plants there, for instance different species of orchids, like western marsh orchid, as well as numerous butterflies, usually rare species, and other insects.

By 2007 the Zarth, called by local inhabitants also "the Devil's Forest" since the name "zarth" originates from the Slavic word "tschert" or "tschort" meaning "devil", belonged to the town of Treuenbrietzen. When the commune offered it for sale, for a long time there were no potential buyers of this forest in which a natural reserve was established in 1945 and which was protected. Only afterwards, the non-governmental organisation operating on the international level, that is Vogelschutz-Komitee e.V. seated in Hamburg decided to buy the Zarth which is of particular protective value as biotope for birds. Not only numerous species of breeding birds were the reason why the organisation decided to buy the area of riparian forest. The aim was to ensure a permanent "stop biotope" for migrating birds to make it possible for the Zarth to become an important breeding habitat and one of places of uninterrupted rest in the territory that is intensively used by people, a landscape that is now too rare. In the course of migration between breeding areas and wintering grounds, birds need such "stops"

where, besides food and shelter, they can also find tranquillity and security that are needed for their rest and restoring energy resources. Even if a 280-hectare area of the Zarth forest is like a pinhead on the map, it plays an important ecological function in both, the international phenomena of passage of birds and in the biocenosis characterised by a large potential of genetic resources of numerous species.

The objective of the Vogelschutz-Komitee e.V. is a comprehensive protection of the bird living environment without its anthropogenic use by people. This exceptional world of birds could not exist without such multi-species forest and meadow living environment. Without an appropriate substrate, no functional biocenosis can exist. Thus, a permanent protection of living environments and breeding areas is not possible without attention paid to all species and their ecological functions in their mutual relationships constituting an essential element of biodiversity (that does not include a number of species only). That is why, the purchase of this area and "governing the substrate" resulting from it has had a decisive role in the operations of the VsK. It is the only way to control or even prevent from biocenotic risk of these areas resulting from anthropogenic activities and from usually determining and disturbing impacts, also within the borders of riparian



Meadow hand-cut in the Zarth Reserve

forest of the Zarth.

When the organisation found out about the project entitled “The Ecological Corridor of South Brandenburg”, an inclusion of the Zarth in the complex living environment for birds by the VsK was only a consequence of this. Everything fits together: the objective, development of long-lasting islands of wild forest in the cultural landscape and

tional level, as well. Moreover, due to the fact that they belong to a large common system of watercourses, riparian forest is predestined to be covered with the concept of wild primeval forest landscape. The knowledge that the “wild” protection zone may fully develop its potential as a living environment with the presence of natural spectrum of species and migration of appropriate

waited for. It can and should come here and settle in – however, it will not be brought here artificially. “The beavers will come of their own accord, completely without our participation” - the Vogelschutz-Komitee e.V. is very sure of it. Especially, because still growing number of other forest inhabitants hate beavers for economic reasons, hence this type of refugia with a system



Small retention in Zarth - everything is possible

connecting them with each other by means of “corridors”. Also the fact that the Zarth is centrally located the area of the “ecological corridor” that spreads from the border with the neighbouring Poland on the east to the border with the state of Saxony-Anhalt covering the whole forest area, is another argument for the inclusion of the Zarth on an institu-

specimen of plants and animals, and an exchange among populations will be possible again are the reasons supporting the decision on the inclusion of the Zarth into the future common development of ecological network.

The occurrence of the otter confirms the leading role of ecological corridor in the Zarth area. The beaver will not be long

of proper habitats are necessary for those animals. Accordingly, the organization creates a possibility for them to settle in here.

Due to the fact that maintaining ground waters in the Zarth is a big problem, similarly like in other moors dewatered as a result of land reclamation, the beaver with its ability of dam building will be a

welcome guest in Zarth. His dams will help to improve maintaining water in the landscape. It will not lack food, however, the water should be cared for first. Water is the most important substrate: „Nihil sine qua aqua” – it is a basis for all ecological processes, not only in the moor. Small watercourses in the Zarth are sucked in by local sources, the underground basin of which reach the areas of Fläming landscape from the west. The decrease of ground water level, visible in the neighbourhood, water consumption by agriculture and shortage in creation of ground water due to small amount of precipitation are a very serious problem. Additionally, there is a ranging monoculture of pines growing in the neighbouring forests. In these places, there is no creation of new ground water. Usually, rare rainfalls have no possibility to penetrate into the ground through a layer of fallen pine needles. The water flows down on the surface quickly, so there is no creation of new ground water. A lot of effort and implementation of projects covering large areas will be required to restore the original state and exchange pines, strange in this area, with mixed leafy alder and hornbeam forests.

A single non-governmental organisation, like the VsK e.V., is not able to carry on this task without financial support. A cooperation, which the “Ecological Corridor” wants to propagate, and properly big investments are

needed. Along with the transformation of pine forests into small private areas, which the Committee wants to buy, the first step towards the goal will be made. Hence, the water management in

mate, which, under the influence of leafy trees, would transform from the current dry into a wetter one.

The goal, which is the most important priority of the organisation, and which will be implemented as a long-lasting protection of riparian forest, which is to be understood as permanent and long-term one, held for centuries, is to contribute to the global protection of climate. It is forests and swamps that for hundreds and thousands of years store large resources of coal, originated from air carbon dioxide. In trunks and roots of trees and plants growing in the moor, which do not degrade due to lack of air in the water-soaked swampy ground, but remain undegraded, there is carbon, which is not returned to the circulation of matter – for thousands of years. The same process concerns the circulation of nitrogen. The riparian forests are the most effective way to lower the global level of carbon dioxide. Accordingly, the Zarth riparian forest should be forever preserved without any exploitation of wood or peat and left without disturbance, in agreement with the organisation’s articles of incorporation.

The currently stored carbon dioxide and substances containing nitrogen will be removed from the matter circulation for a long, long time. All the trees will end their life cycle without human interference. As a “dead wood” standing tall, and then



the area of the Zarth moor and in the adjacent alder and hornbeam forest relicts will be restored, in a manner similar to natural. This situation shall also result in the change of local microcli-

lying on the ground, it is a substrate for many organisms. On the surface and inside a “dead wood” there is more vigorous life than ever before, until the tree itself, by assimilation of carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, returns the oxygen to the air and incorporates carbon into its body. Here, birds living in lairs, bats and other species will find their breeding space and insect-eating birds will find food. Along with increase even now significant amount of dead wood, the biodiversity in the Zarth and the number of species fulfilling their function in a given time and place will increase even more. A possibility of longer living of the organisms will allow to maintain a genetic biodiversity. When finally small parts of the tree are returned to a natural circulation of nutrition substances and undegraded parts of a dead tree sink in the peat, its role will not be finished completely; the wood will keep carbon in its body for a long time and hence it will stop re-creation of carbon dioxide. A riparian forest, left alone, is not only neutral with respect to CO₂, like a forest intended for economic goals, used according to a secularity principle. This kind of forest is CO₂-positive, it feeds the atmosphere with less carbon dioxide than it draws from it and stores CO₂ in its biomass.

Accordingly, the interests and goals connected with birds and climate protection will be realised in an optimal way, as contemporary tasks that should

be dealt with first. To carry on to the next steps, it is necessary to create regulations. This is why it is necessary to update, as fast as possible, the Regulation on protection of natural goods, issued as early as in 1954, and replace it with a new regulation

result of interference of man and his cattle. If the meadows are not mowed and pastured, they will become grown over. Out of 80 ha of meadow area, once existing in the forest area of the Zarth, currently only 50 ha exist, which are subjected to mowing.



on protected areas, valid for everyone, in which the protection of the process, meaning natural



development, not disturbed by anthropogenic interference, will be guaranteed as a main goal. Apart from the ban of anthropogenic interference, the regulation should mention only the mowing of meadows, in order to maintain them. Natural meadows are practically non-existent in Central Europe. They arise as a

The process protection, “undisturbed development of biocenose of all plants and animals in the natural circulation of matter and energy” will find its reflection in the birds’ world. As already mentioned, currently almost half of the breeding birds species are in Zarth “Wiesenvogel”, for which adapted living space should be preserved.

Valuable meadow biocenoses with orchids, devilsbit, Dyer’s plumeless sawwort and other rare species of plants can be preserved only with appropriate care. The schedule of mowing and removing mowing residues should be fitted to the time of blossoming and creation of seeds in this precious world of plants.

.Due to sippy grounds, the mowing can be done only with machines fitted to moving on quaggy areas. In turn, if the mowing is discarded, the process of extinction of plants, insects, amphibians and birds will occur visibly. "Overgrowth" of the meadow would exert a significant influence on the decrease of biodiversity. Many species of birds and plants are inhabitants of open areas or boundaries of forests. Along with a natural succession, they would disappear from this area and it would be influenced by a usually desirable "process protection". It would also cause a loss of many butterflies. To prevent this process it is necessary to protect or manage the meadows. Currently, there are about 50 ha of meadows managed in the Zarth, to which a proper subsidy from the Budget of Environment Protection of Brandenburg is accrued. Along a road, which goes across the reservation and which can be used by people

as a place of rest, the mowed meadow will be maintained as an action for the protection of biotope. However, such leaving of uncovered area of meadow costs a lot. For a farmer, it is usually not profitable, hence a participation of public means, in a form of financial subsidies, is necessary to cover costs of care.

Also big animals like the stag deer will have here better living conditions, they should also find an undisturbed place of stay here. The organisation will also ban hunting on its territory. The protective process should enclose all animals and they should fulfil their ecological function. This is especially important due to the fact that in the future new species of wild animals, like the wolf, the lynx or the wildcat, for which calm zones have a special meaning, will come here. Accordingly, the whole area should be incorporated into the Ecological Corridor of South Brandenburg as a quiet

zone for wild animals.

Apart from sippy areas and ponds in „Rhinluch" (north west of Berlin) and in the reservation of beechwood forest on the edge of the Oder branching (north east of Berlin) in the vicinity of Bad Freienwalde (areas formerly used for military purposes), a new "oasis for birds" in Brandenburg was bought, with the purpose of environmental protection, to keep it, in accordance with the articles of incorporation, safe from sale and economic use by man so that it can be a reservation for ever.

Dr. Eberhardt Schneider
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The future of PTOp – PTOp nature reserves management organization

Report on the five-day visit to PTOp in May 2010 -

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The leading subject of an intensive experience exchange, among others, between the Polish Society for Bird Protection (PTOP) and Vogelschutz-Komitee eV (VSK) from Germany, which took place in recent weeks, was PTOp nature reserves management organizations planning. As an experience exchange on 3-7 May 2010 PTOp was visited by Dr. Eberhard Schneider and Andreas Papke VSK. Already several years ago VSK and PTOp established a vibrant contact and a constructive cooperation.

Dr Eberhard Schneider is a president of VSK. Both the VSK and PTOp have the same priority objective: the protection of birds. In addition to numerous national and international events (information on www.vogelschutz-komitee.de) VSK's important actions are purchasing land valuable for nature conservation, and their possible permanent security or devel-

opment. Ownership of valuable indigenous fauna habitat strongly facilitates the planned requirements of specialized nature conservation, is generally a prerequisite for drawing up the long-term development plan for management organization and maintenance of certain land.

Since 2007, Mr. Andreas Papke has been working closely with the VSK, especially in nurturing and/or development of the Nature Reserve land and the conservation of wild flora and fauna habitats of "Zarth" near Treuenbrietzen (Brandenburg) with a total area of approximately 260 ha. In 2007, VSK bought a marshy land, being almost entirely owned by the city of Treuenbrietzen. Since 2000, Andreas Papke has provided avifauna multispecies adequate conditions of life through care and preservation of about 47 ha of wetland meadows in the nature reserve and the conservation of habitats of "Zarth" - wild flora and fauna near

Treuenbrietzen. Besides he prepared and introduced a number of measures to improve biotope, restoration of the old wetland meadows to name just a few. As an agricultural engineer specializing in ecologically-oriented peat bog reclamation, and the certified engineer of nature and landscape protection he provides a high level of practical implementation of dispositions on the protection and development and he actively contributes to plans for further development of land management. Thanks to the landscape protection lasting for 11 years already the cooperating VSK, nature conservation offices in Brandenburg, the board of the Natural Reserve "Nuthe-Nieplitz and Conservation Guards gained a lot of valuable experience. It should be used while visiting PTOp to help develop further ideas of the Society on the local projects and establish PTOp nature reserves management organization and a vista plan.



Illustrations: on the left: periodic mowing of wetland meadows in the bog of the National Park and Habitat Protection in wild "Zarth" fauna and flora
On the right: white storks in search of food on the freshly mown PN meadows

Equipped with a hydro-air mower a circular hydraulic press can be freely adjusted to the sensitive peat bog. Optimally matched tractor tires reduce the pressure on the soil to a level below c. 235 g/cm². The blades provide mowing cut height of 10-12 cm, to protect the amphibians, reptiles and other small terrestrial organisms. Additional application of mechanical and electronic detectors serves the loss of game prevention.

Żywkowo Stork Village

Żywkowo was the main purpose of the five-day visit to PTOp. In a small village located near the Russian border PTOp pursues its efforts to ensure long-lasting improvements and living conditions of White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*). About 70% of these birds are hatched within the Baltic Sea and eastern Poland. Moreover, the Mazury Lake District is a major breeding area for the global white stork population, so it's important to durably sustain for its natural living conditions. In 2004 45 stork pairs settled in Żywkowo, and it is still considered to be a record year for the Lake District. At the present visit 28 nests were occupied, including 11 directly at the PTOp yard. This farmyard was pur-

chased by PTOp with 39 hectares of land in the village area. Local PTOp project manager Sebastian Menderski presented the results of previous work and future plans. There are currently restoration works being carried out on the farm, small water reservoirs were established, the fallow land overgrown forests were partly overtaken for renewed utilization, thereby assuring their preservation. There are plans to purchase more land. The surface preservation consists primarily of grazing. PTOp currently owns a substantial herd of Polish horses and Polish Red cows. Their own forage plants are grown extensively in cooperation with a local farmer.

In addition to the protection of the White Stork

PTOp set itself the objective of maintaining rare old utility breeds. Polish Red cows with low weight are suitable for wetland posts grazing. They are also believed to be more resistant to diseases and make better use of even poorer energy feed, such as Cyperaceae. Although these cows provide less milk, it contains much fat and has a special flavor. Perhaps this is a chance to introduce their eco-products to the market. Besides the maintenance and improvement of living conditions in the white stork retreats Żywkowo's other goals are tourism and environmental education. Since 1999, when the village opened up to tourism, it has been visited by 30,000 people from around the world.

Successful own offspring

A small Polish horse colt is currently the youngest member of the expanding herd. The stock growth could be a base for the creation of other stocks that could be appropriately embedded in the sub-PTOp land to protect them. Regular surface grazing with the emerging trees may prevent their overgrowing.

There may also arise the possibility of alternative use, such as the development of tourism in Żywkowo.



Therefore PTOPI intends to prepare relevant activities in its farm to ensure further continuing influx of tourists and could help introduce their own products to the market. There are plans, e.g. to organize guest rooms in the barn that requires extension, adequate sanitary base development and also possibly opening their own cafe. The highest priority for all dispositions is, however, to ensure optimal environmental conditions for the White Stork and instructive education reinforcing environmental knowledge about stork life and protection.

Kwiecewo

Kwiecewo was another village on that day. A little northeast of the village there is a shallow lake with an area of 50 ha. Due to its specific structure it makes an extremely valuable habitat to many bird species living in aquatic areas, especially gulls, numerous seedlings. What is also worth mentioning is the presence of Winged Tern. According to Sebastian Menderski it is one of the largest clusters in eastern Poland. During a walk around the lake we were discussing problems connected with the lake and its

surroundings. The major problem is the use of surrounding areas. The shallow lake is actually the polder area and is only supplied by rain water flowing from the surrounding fields, there is no natural outflow. The existing pumping station only gives the possibility of underground drainage, which would be extremely problematic for the lake. Due to its small water depth the lake is also particularly vulnerable to pollution, coming from farmsteads. In some places there is no required buffer zone around the reservoir, it is partly utilized for agricultural purposes up to the lake shore. Inorganic soil is also cultivated near the tanks. In this way, there is always a danger of mineral fertilizers or pesticides passing freely to water which may lead to disastrous consequences to the flora and fauna there. Although the greater part of the tank with the relevant coastal is state owned, it does not guarantee sufficient protection. For example, an active company adjacent to the lake from the west, being a large undertaking, has a long term land lease around the lake and other parcels in the region. So far, it was not possible to focus on the maintenance of the area around the

lake shore for optimum protection of reservoir and biotope.

For many years PTOPI has been seeking to purchase a 2-acre parcel at the north lake shore, pursued by an individual farmer as a buffer zone or alternatively to replace any parcels in the interest of the lake. In order to safeguard and improve existing living conditions in the shallow waters of the lake and around it, a protective regime must be enacted systematically as well as an appropriate stratification of the coastal area, mainly pertaining to the surface and a buffer zone should be created. Further measures are currently underway to purchase the above-lying land around the lake, which may be taken over by a possible exchange for other land parcels.

Gródecko -Michalowska Trough

After visiting Kwiecewo and Żywkowo we drove to the Białystok area. From Next day along with Gabriela Kułakowska from PTOPI we went to Grodek. Here we met with PTOPI representatives: Roman Kalski and Edyta Kapowicz and then drove together to the Gródecko-Michalowski Trough, part of the Natura 2000 territory



The shallow Sunia lake in Kwiecewo
The view of agricultural land at the lake.

It is clear that part of the coastal belt is utilized for agriculture. On the visiting day the land was marked out where plant protection products and fertilizers are to be pulverized. An important goal is to create buffer zones to protect a legally regulated protection. It should prevent the progressive succession of trees within the reservoir and to avoid any water pumping from the shallow lake.

“Knyszynska Primeval Forest“. South of Grodek there is the Rabinówka Nature Reserve. It is a black grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*) place of living, which is why the main priorities for the area are improving and developing the structures of specific habitats and animal species and their suitable protection. To achieve this, PTOB tries to incorporate the next adjacent land surrounding the Reserve. The Society has already bought several plots of land and is planning to purchase more, most directly bordering the “Rabinówka” Nature Reserve or located in its vicinity. We visited some areas on the northern edge of the reserve. A further extensive use of the 200-meter belt of meadows is planned to the west of the Mielleszki village along the main ditch border with reserve, and above all improve the water regime in then ditch. One should also to think of the ditch, and meanders similar in shape to the natural ones. Periods of mowing should be integrated with existing or desired range of species, in particular with the requirements of black grouse. In case of prudent grazing confounding factors conditioned by it must be taken into account.

The meadows south of Grodek we visited belong to a large grassland complex. The Supraśl river flows from the main water or drainage ditch along the Reserve border. Vast, open areas are drained by numerous ditches, which in turn drain into Supraśl.

PTOB began the im-

plementation of certain orders in the purchased land. Drainage ditches were filled, which inhibited the outflow of water in the area. The consequence of these actions are the specific requirements for the landscape conservation and protection, which must be satisfied by contract farmers. In the meadows of the ever-decreasing capacity the priority is to create a sustainable system of continued irrigation. Determining the mowing terms one should be guided primarily by the Black Grouse life rhythm, especially not to interfere with the tooting period. In order to improve the Black Grouse food supply one should deliberately cultivate suitable forage plants, or reintroduce the missing species. Subsidized cotton grass cultivation as grouse food is possible and advisable. In the water-filled trenches and their location the state of cotton grass could be improved by e.g. introducing a mass clippings

seed-off (taken for example from peat extraction areas north of the “Gorbacz“ Nature Reserve). The plant could spread from the primary zone to adjacent grassland. Equally other forage crops (such as cranberries, bog bilberry and crowberry) can also be cultivated. This way, within the newly-filled drainage ditches one could create valuable forage areas among the mowed wetland and help secure conservation of black grouse.

The Gorbacz Nature Reserve and the peat extraction area south of the Lewsze village / Kalitnik PTOB Station

Our next stop was the area of peat extraction to the south from the Lewsze village. PTOB intends to purchase the already exhausted peat land there for the measures obtained from the European Union and by methodical management of



A filled amelioration ditch in the meadows south of Grodek

New structures arose by filling drainage ditches on large areas of meadows. The meadows water outflow channeled by the existing system of ditches has been interrupted. Thus greatly reduced the differences in water levels in large spaces, which positively affected the nature of the environment of the adjacent grassland.

In the new areas of old drainage ditches one can achieve a significant re-evaluation of the environment by growing the plants planned for the black grouse forage (eg *Eriophorum*)

water resources to restore the peat vegetation, in order to regain a wholesome environment. Moreover, in this case there is a need to purchase plots of land situated between the peat extraction areas and the "Gorbacz" Nature Reserve by private sponsors. This would hinder the integration of the acreage and its long-term protection or development. However, current and future long-term extraction of peat from neighboring plots is a major problem. As long as the exploitation takes place optimal water retention in the depleted areas is impossible. It is therefore necessary to attempt to negotiate or agree with the operator of the highest possible water state in the unfortunately already approved peat mine. The plan relating to the purchase of those parcels, although in distant future, yet makes an important step and a necessary prerequisite for the introduction of remedial measures to revive the peat bog. Facing the drastic climate changes, security and development of living space are a valuable addition to the protection of important factors in climate protection and development of wetlands. The last town, we went to on that day, was Kalitnik. PTOB purchased two log houses with a small plot here. One can easily reach PTOB-owned land from here, located north of the "Rabinówka" Reserve. There are plans to repair the house, i.e. for scientific purposes and use it as a base to pro-

tect the PTOB land. The PTOB presence at this site also allows maintaining direct contact with the contract partners and enforcing the protection rulings. The location of volunteer helpers on site is also an interesting aspect of further PTOB work.

We went from the Gródecko - Michałowska Basin to Białowieża with Gabriela Kułakowska and Edyta Kapowicz in the evening. On our way we passed an artificial lake of Siemianówka - an area of about 30 km², damming up water of Narew east of Bondar. Thanks to its structure and diverse coastline the reservoir is extremely valuable for avifauna.

Białowieża / protection of the Lesser Spotted Eagle and meadow projects among others

The following day we visited the nearest PTOB projects. The first stop was the Narewka project at our residence. With the elements of aqua-engineering and application of biological engineering in the coastal zone the water level raised so high that the standing water zone was combined with Narewka again and is now supplied with water containing less oxygen. Upon work completion flowing water enters both Narewka and its reconstructed old branch / an area of standing water through various built-in slides. PTOB is planning to continue its work on Narewka and its tributaries in the district of Bi-

alowicza. Their goal is water retention, and reactivation of already existing old river branch. Then we went to PTOB-owned area near Białowieża National Park. Bearing in mind the improvement of the living conditions of Lesser Spotted Eagle one should turn this land into open meadow areas and ensure their long-term protection. The use cessation of many agricultural land situated in river valleys and forest clearings is primarily considered to be the cause of the Lesser Spotted Eagle decline since the mid-70s. Increasing the open space and partly planned afforestation results in the loss of essential nesting and feeding grounds of the Lesser Spotted Eagle. It is therefore a priority for the protection of Lesser Spotted Eagle to maintain the landscape preservation and restoration of open space.

Since in case of PTOB-owned areas the land is usually uncultivated, it is often first necessary to develop them as hay meadows or lay grassland. The existing forest stand growth should be restrained, the remaining trunks grubbed. The aim afterward is to immediately introduce a cutting regime obtained by local contract farmers which guarantees a lasting improvement of Lesser Spotted Eagle living conditions. There are at the same time various views on the transformation methods and setting deadlines for mowing. Early May grass mowing for a relatively low grass level during

the raising of the Lesser Spotted Eagle chicks, which we are striving for, also within the coastal areas of open space, not less favorable to the other occurring in these areas nesting birds, especially winding its nest on the ground. One should therefore seek to optimize the environment of living Lesser Spotted Eagle, especially its feeding grounds, taking into account the requirements of other very rare local bird species, and optimizing their living conditions. It is therefore necessary to consider the possibility of mowing terms graduation, accounting for the whole inventory of existing species. The forenoon brought the visitation of the wet meadows and the wooden hut on the border of Białowieża purchase by PTO. For the necessary restoration of the house PTO is considering employment of a farmer, who lives on the site and will acquire land conservation of the PTO landscape.

Białowieża Primeval Forest

In the afternoon we all went to the north-western part of the Białowieża Primeval Forest, located east of the Zwodzieckie village. In addition to numerous bird protection programs since 2001 PTO has been implementing a “program of water retention in the woods”, containing a number of projects to improve the retention of water or water landscaping in the Białowieża Primeval Forest. Roman Kalski announced proudly the devices built in different places, spoke of designing and building constructions. These are small slides or thresholds, built in accordance with the requirements and needs of the local footwall, accumulating water at specified intervals or at certain points of drainage ditches and small streams. The results of the current orders implementation made a really good impression on us.

With these remedies the drainage of the area on large

spaces was significantly reduced or delayed. The resulting steady water levels contribute to the maintenance or further development of the unique forest environment landscape which constitutes extremely varied plant and animal world. High water saturation at the same time prevents further degradation (mineralization) of peat land. On many positions there were also conditions created necessary for actively growing turf. Next to the positive aspects of the impact on land use and community water landscape genre and biocenosis of the Białowieża Primeval Forest an enormous contribution to the protection of soil and climate was

Narew south of Białystok

On the last day of the visit we headed towards Białystok with Gabriela Kulakowska. There, in the PTO office we met Ania Suchowolec and went together to the Narwiański National Park. For years in this

One of 80 PTO footwall fault ledges built to date for conserving water in the Białowieża

Primeval Forest

Visible success achieved by multiple fault ledge constructions in the Białowieża Primeval Forest for water retention was impressive. Significant results were achieved by simple means of use. The levels of fault ledge increases the further parts only a few dm, so that in each case the reservoir water flow is retained. The layout of successive fault ledges at specific intervals on the network of ditches space and watercourses enables the achievement of very high efficiency.



part of the Narwia PTOP has been involved in reactivation of old river branches areas as the environment and the buffer zone of Narwiański National Park. River canalization and the adjacent land water control continuing since the 80s for the benefit of agriculture steadily intensified caused significant changes. Due to the interference in the water regimes and the increasing abandonment of extensive management the living conditions of many of the region-specific bird species have substantially changed, which resulted in the strong species diversity decrease, and decrease of individual numbers of other species. We saw two footwall fault ledges built so far in Narew, which are major restoration projects of river downstream areas. Construction of the second fault ledge has been funded, among others, by the EcoFund Foundation and the Foundation for Regional Environment and Natural Resources in Białystok. It was put into service just recently, in the spring of 2010. The goal of these devices is the re-elevation of Narew water in this area to a constant level. Thanks

to that the surfaces of old branches should begin to flow again and connect with the mainstream river. This way, areas isolated due to the water reduction can connect to the Narew network. The Rzędziany-Pańki Embankment, passing through the three branches of old Narew creeks, was opened in place of the three tributaries and linked with a wooden bridge. Thus, the embankment has lost a separator character, at least from the hydrological perspective, which is very important for the recombined network of areas in the north-eastern Narew area. However, there are difficulties yet to overcome. Above all, the intensive farm use of the west Narew side is limiting further water level increase. Besides the weir on the second fault ledge, a bit up the river at the Rzędziany-Pańki conjunction adjusts the water in favor of farming. Nevertheless, the already completed task components of this project have already produced significant results. We are leaving our recent longer lasting five-day visit to the PTOP Narew station and beginning the journey back to

Berlin in a very good and optimistic mood. PTOP's accomplishments had already made a strong impression on us. The visit enabled an insight into the multilateral PTOP work primarily for the conservation and sustainable living environment to maintain native birdlife. We exchanged a variety of experiences, shared our mutual impulses to act and gained new knowledge. During our constructive discussions we debated the specific requirements and remedies, in particular those related to the PTOP grassland management. In a separate report to be drawn on the basis of previously visited sites, we will forward specific guidance on possible improvements or supplement of the current activities as well as ideas and visions, and especially the land organization. The 10 years experience in the field of peat land protection in the Nature Reserve area "Zarth" near Treuenbrietzen should also find its place there.

text and photos Andreas Pöpke



The area of the two already built fault ledges in the Narew riverbed. The image on the left shows fault ledges originally built slightly against the current fault ledge; on the right photo you can see the second fault ledge opened in the spring of 2010.



Join us!

Polish Society for Bird Protection.

Our company is focused on protecting the habitats of birds, particularly waterfowls and marsh birds. In order to shape the environment for the winged residents PTOP has been purchasing land and setting up social reserves - Important Bird Areas for several years. By 2009, we managed to raise funds for the purchase of 1,500 hectares. These are mainly wetland meadows, marshes, wooded land

and wasteland.

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Vogelschutz-Komitee e.V.

An association formed to protect birds, wildlife, animals and their natural living environment. VSK is engaged in activities aimed at increasing the number of bird breeding sites. VSK fights against the abuse of live animals trade. They stand against shooting off migratory birds in southern Europe. They take action to protect the bird refuges in Germany, Spain, France, Poland by supporting the land purchase. VSK is the owner of land in Germany, it leases the others in order to create private nature conservation reserves. VSK manages its nature reserves in accordance with rules aimed at increasing biodiversity. Degraded areas are subjected to renaturalization. It maintains its activities from public grants, private donations and ongoing projects.

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