

After-LIFE Communication plan

LIFE09 NAT/PL/000253

Protection of the white stork population on the Natura 2000

Ostoja Warmińska area



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Natura 2000 Ostoja Warmińska area is extremely important area for the protection of the white stork population as well as other species of birds that are subject of wildlife conservation in the area. It is also one of the largest Natura 2000 sites in Poland.

In maintaining and preserving the habitats of rare species of birds in Ostoja Warmińska it primarily favors the presence of large areas of extensively used meadows, pastures and wetlands as well as low population density in the border areas that are within it. The greatest threats to birdlife and its habitats in this area are: continuing reduction of grassland as a result of overgrowth, forestation (especially in the border zone) or conversion into arable land, the intensification of agriculture and the introduction of monoculture crops on a large scale, use of chemicals in agriculture and eutrophication of water reservoirs, liquidation of midfield wetlands and trees and drying of wetlands habitats.

LIFE09 NAT/PL/000253 project, *Protection of the white stork population on the Natura 2000 Ostoja Warmińska area*, was aimed primarily at improving the habitat and nesting conditions and also at maintaining agricultural landscape diversity of refuge.

The key task requiring continuation once the project is terminated is to carry out annual monitoring of the white stork. This activity will allow to record qualitative and quantitative changes in the population status. Longstanding results in the monitoring of the white stork population and its nesting sites allow to capture the negative changes and to implement effective conservation actions. The activity will be continued each year after the completion of the project by the Polish Society for the Protection of Birds, with the involvement of volunteers and thanks to funding from WFOŚiGW in Olsztyn.

The aim should be to develop detailed database containing information on the type of key areas for birds habitats protection, which are the subject of Natura 2000 protection sites, land management being habitats for birds, less important areas where various types of investments could be implemented. In order to accomplish this task, the results of the inventory of permanent grassland, made as part of the project, must be used as starting base for the present study. This task is cost intensive and therefore will require financing from national or EU funds. The beneficiary responsible for the execution of the above task will be Regional Directorate of the Environmental Protection in Olsztyn as supervising entity over Natura 2000 sites. The implementation of the task should be started immediately after the completion of the project.

The activities that will be continued once the project ends will be aimed towards the direct protection of the white stork, e.g. the improvement of the nests or rescue the birds facing immediate danger (e.g. birds entangled in the string). These activities will be conducted by the volunteer firefighter brigades who received equipment purchased for the project funds based on the signed 5-year commitment.

In addition, the essential activity to be carried out is aimed at public education through teaching about the white stork, its needs and customs also threats and how to deal with sick birds. The focus should be to show the benefits of conducting organic farming as favourable way of land use, the white stork friendly. Mainly, it is about the use of natural fertilizers (manure), customize the way of mowing the meadows (from inside to outside) and, what is most important for the white stork, it's proper grazing, meaning maintaining it at the low level. The role of ponds and swamps should be emphasized as an important feeding base for the white stork and water holes, especially in periods of drought. This activity will be carried out by RDOŚ and PTOŚ, among others, at the Information and Education Centre. Very popular are regular meetings for school groups taking place in the centre - approximately 10 school trips during the period from May to June. Furthermore, the centre is visited by approximately 1500 tourists per year. These are both individual tourists but also organised groups from the country and abroad, Germany, France, UK and even Japan. The vast majority of visitors are adults, families, the elders (the groups of pensioners, the third age universities).

Another activity to be continued once the project is terminated will be organizing annual festival called "The White Stork Day", in cooperation with the municipality of Górowo Iławeckie, which can be an interesting way to reach out to the community from households in the area through documentary film screenings, presentations, handing out brochures. These activities do not generate high costs but require only the substantive involvement of entities dealing with wildlife conservation on a daily basis. Funding for this type of tasks related to public education, organizing festivals, publishing promotional materials can be obtained from Regional or National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management.