

## Introduction

The **Dviete Floodplain** Nature Park was established in 2004 to ensure protection of unique nature values – rare and specially protected wild birds and plants, and habitats. The need for protection has been set in the Latvian legal norms established in response to the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives of the European Union. The nature park has been designated as a Natura 2000 site (registration code LV0302900) following the EU Directive on Protection of wild birds (79/409 EEC) and the Directive on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43 EEC) (source: Natura 2000 of Latvia – a lists of protected nature areas of European importance )

In the beginning of the 90s the Dviete floodplain was recognized as a site important for nature conservation (Anon. 1992); it was later included in the CORINE Biotopes project site list under the name of Dviete (total area 1746 ha; Opermanis et al 1997). Subsequently it was well inventoried and documented as an important bird site, and included in three consecutive lists for internationally important sites (Heath & Evans 2000, Račinskis un Stīpniece 2000, Račinskis 2004).

In 2003, the Limnology Institute, Ltd. developed a management plan for the potential Dviete Floodplain Natura 2000 site (Škute 2003). The plan covered a time period of five years (2003-2008), and was mostly based on the Dviete floodplain species and habitats inventory performed in the summer of 2003, and on local inhabitants' recommendations for floodplain management.

As part of the LIFE-Nature project on Restoration of Latvian Floodplains for EU Priority Species and Habitats administered by the Latvian Fund for Nature and with financial support from the Nature Protection Board, in 2005 the Latvian Ornithological Society (LOS) developed a management plan for the Dviete Floodplain Nature Park. The general part of the plan combines information on the nature values of the park from the previous management plan with some new revisions and additions; to be able to offer new information, in 2005 the LOS carried out an additional survey of bird fauna and coordinated inventory of invertebrates, mammals and reptiles. A survey of rare and specially protected plants and habitats outside the area studied in 2003 was also undertaken. As a result, conservation objectives, area zoning and management activities were established for the park.

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[http://www.dap.gov.lv/public/files\\_uploaded/Natura%202000/latvijas\\_natura\\_2000\\_saraksts.pdf](http://www.dap.gov.lv/public/files_uploaded/Natura%202000/latvijas_natura_2000_saraksts.pdf)

## Summary

The Dviete Floodplain Nature Park was established in 2004 with the goal of preserving an internationally unique nesting and assembling area of wild birds. The site also boasts rare, minimally altered flooding grassland habitats. The total area of the site is 4989 ha, and it is one of the largest and best-preserved natural floodplain ecosystems in Latvia and Europe.

The management plan contains information on the nature and socio-economic values, and cultural heritage of the Dviete Floodplain Nature Park. The plan established long-term and short-term goals for the preservation of the site, and recommended appropriate management actions. Currently, there are over 40 specially protected bird species of Latvian and EU importance registered in the nature park; additionally, there are also migratory species listed in the EU Birds Directive, Article 4.2. The Dviete floodplain is one of the best nesting places for the rails spotted crake, the corncrake and the great snipe in Latvia. In 2005, at least 23-30 thousand migratory birds were at one time observed in the Dviete floodplain; this number of birds qualifies the site as a globally important bird assembling area.

The site also hosts 2 Latvian and 7 European Union protected habitats: the *Nardus* meadows, the purple moor-grass meadows, species-rich *Nardus* meadows, Fennoscandian lowland species-rich dry to mesic grasslands, and *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils, hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities, lowland hay meadows (floodplain meadows), alluvial broadleaf forests, and natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition*-type vegetation. There are 8 specially protected plant species, 8 invertebrate species, 2 mammal and 2 amphibian species found here.

The nature park has two functional zones – the nature reserve and the nature park zones. The management plan is drawn for the time period 2006 – 2015; at the end of this period the document has to be revised. Draft individual regulations for protection and utilization of the site are annexed to the management plan; the regulations have been presented during the public hearing for the plan.