



Rural Development Programme and floodplains in Latvia

Sigulda, 11-12.10.2007.

Inga Račinska
Latvian Fund for Nature



Project “Restoration of Floodplains”

PROJECT FACTSHEET

1 October 2004 - 30 June 2008

Financiers: ES LIFE-Nature fund, UNDP, Nature Protection Board, Environmental Protection fund, Ministry of Environment, local communities.

Implemented by Latvian Fund for Nature

Partners: Nature Protection Board, North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, Latvian Ornithological Society, 22 local municipalities.



FLOODPLAINS - HIGH NATURE VALUE

- Habitat type: 6450 Northern Boreal alluvial meadows
- 7 other HD Annex I meadow habitat types
- 3 HD Annex II species
- Habitat for globally threatened species
 - Corncrake
 - Great Snipe
- 21 other BD Annex I bird species

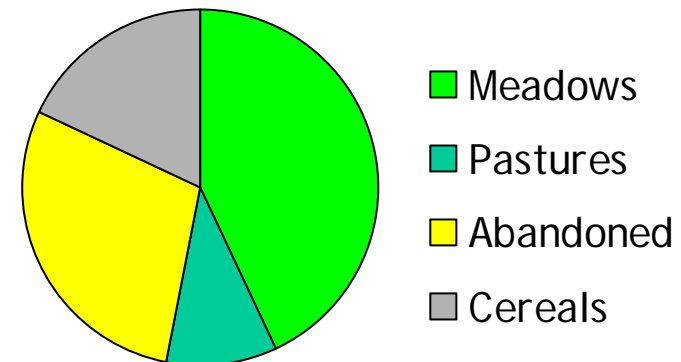


Corncrake *Crex crex*

- Population in Latvia: 26000-38000 pairs*
- The highest densities in floodplain meadows (> 10 males/km²)
- Species conservation action plan
- 20% of EU population



Habitat distribution for Corncrake*



* Source: Keiřs O. 1997. [Population estimate and habitat selection for Corncrake *Crex crex* in Latvia in 1996.] Putni dabā 7.1, 22-27.

Great Snipe

Gallinago media

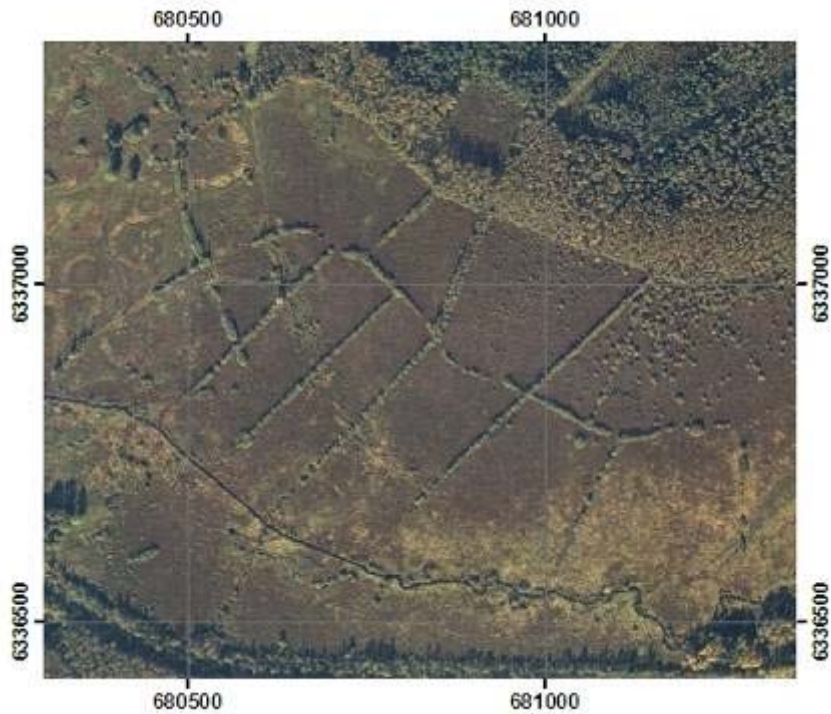
- “rediscovered” in 1990s
- Population in Latvia: 200 - 300 pairs*
- Floodplain specialist
- Feeding requirements
- Breeding behaviour
- Species conservation action plan



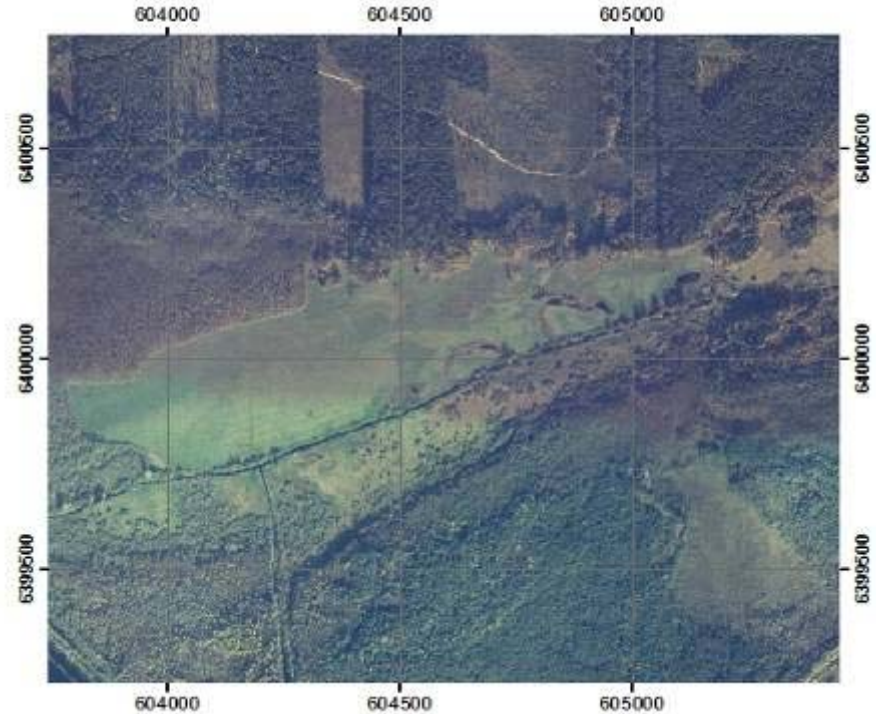
* Source: Auniņš A. 2001. [Territorial distribution, numbers and habitat selection of Great Snipe in Latvia: historical information and current situation (1999-2001)] Putni dabā, Suppl. 1, 1-12.

THREATS TO FLOODPLAINS

Drainage



Abandonment



Fragmentation

Overgrowing

PROJECT ACTIONS

Cutting bushes: 980 ha

Restoration of wooded meadows: 110 ha

Initial mowing: 2400 ha

Restoration LIFE → Agri-environment

Difficulties: Accessibility

Land ownership problems

Hard conditions, floods and snow

Lack of workers and machinery


Some of meadows transformed into forest

No market for hay





THE FUTURE

A photograph of a small, light-colored bird perched on a single strand of barbed wire. The bird is facing right. The background is a lush green field with some white flowers, slightly out of focus. A wooden post is visible on the right side of the frame. The overall scene is bright and natural.

4000 restored hectares with ca 150 landowners

THE FUTURE OF THE MEADOWS RESTORED BY THE PROJECT

Rural Development programme for Latvia

- Biologically valuable grassland payment 138 €/ha
- *Natura 2000 payment 26-36 €/ha*
- Single area payment 26 €/ha
- Less favourable area payment 33-64 €/ha

THE FUTURE OF THE MEADOWS RESTORED BY THE PROJECT

Rural Development programme for Latvia

Agri-environment measure: maintenance of
biodiversity in grasslands

- Payment for extensive grazing - 133 €/ha (-5€/ha)
- Payment for late mowing - 113 €/ha (-25 €/ha)
- Currently ca half of “biologically valuable grasslands” have applied for this support
- Abandonment of “complicated” areas
- Ploughing of “easy” areas

THREATS TO CORNCRAKE AND OTHER FARMLAND BIRDS IN LATVIA

Rural Development programme for Latvia Afforestation of land not used for agriculture

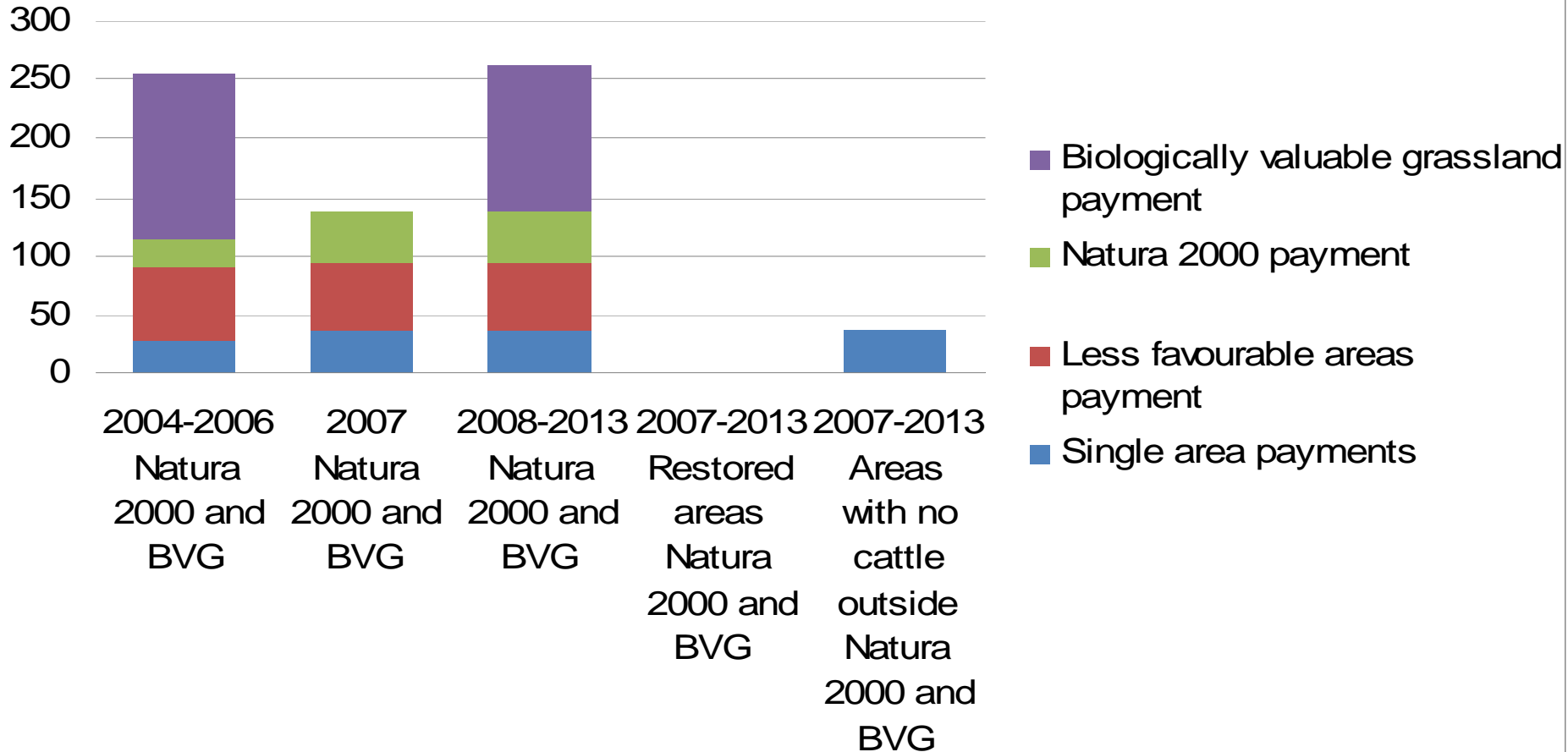
- The measure will negatively affect primary habitats of BD Annex I bird species with core EU populations in Latvia
 - Corncrake (> 26000 pairs; > 20% of EU population)
 - White Stork (> 12000 pairs; ca 12% of EU population)
 - Lesser-spotted Eagle (>2800 pairs; > 40% of EU population)
- Resumption of extensive farming in abandoned areas is required to maintain the population levels of these species

THREATS TO FUTURE OF WET GRASSLANDS IN LATVIA

Rural Development programme for Latvia

- No measures to support the restoration of semi-natural grasslands
- Support payments may be granted only for the areas eligible to single area payment (SAP) - only for areas that were in good agricultural condition in 2003.
- Support to construction and reconstruction of drainage systems, except in Natura 2000 sites
- No support for specific project-based “agri-environment” measures

Support payments 2004-2013





Thank you!

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