

Report on the project exchange to Latvia and Poland (action E.2)

EVENT: Visiting institutions, connected to nature conservation and LIFE projects in Poland and Latvia, with presentation of project LIFE Stržen and exchange of experience with Bittern catching and watercourse renaturation

DATE: 24. 9 – 29. 9. 2017

REPORT AUTHORS: Manca Černigoj and Katarina Mikulić

PARTICIPANTS: DOPPS: Katarina Denac, Tomaž Mihelič

ZZRS: Miha Ivanc

HIDROTEHNIK: Jože Papež

NRP: Irena Likar, Ana Gabrejna, Manca Černigoj, Katarina Mikulić

REPORT:

24. 9. 2017 (Sunday)

Journey from Cerknica to Latvia, overnight stay in Lublin, Poland. The journey lasted from 4 AM to 9 PM, we drove for 1.200 km.

25. 9. 2017 (Monday)

Journey from Poland to Latvia, overnight stay in Jelgava. The journey lasted from 8 AM to 9 PM, we drove for 760 km.

26. 9. 2017 (Tuesday)



Journey from Jelgava to lake Engure, where we met with Jānis Reihmanis and his colleagues who showed us around Lake Engure Nature Park.

We gave our hosts some promotional material about Notranjska Regional Park and our work. LIFE Stržen project manager, Irena Likar, presented our project and project area, and informed our hosts which information interests us most.

Our hosts then presented the Latvian Fund for Nature, an organization that carries out various environmental and environmental educational projects, as well as manages and supervises the park. This was followed by the presentation of their project LIFE Coastlake »Restoration of Bittern habitats in two coastal lakes in Latvia« LIFE12 NAT/LV/000118, which took place from September 2013 and August 2017. In the scope of the project, suitable habitats for the Bittern were established (1100 ha on Lake Engure and 600 ha on Lake Pepe). Some specimens of the Bittern were captured and equipped with GPS trackers.





A lot of attention was given to strengthening the public's understanding of the ecological, economic and social importance of wetlands and the significance of conserving wetland habitat types and species. They prepared brochures, bookmarks, stickers and a promotional film on a flat USB flash drive. This aspect of project implementation is of great interest to the LIFE Stržen project team as well.

For educational and research purposes, a livestreaming camera was installed on a small wooden raft by the Bittern's nest (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWC10_hs3_Q).

They shared their experiences with capturing the Bittern. They tested various techniques and came to the conclusion that capturing nesting females with nets was the most effective.

After the presentations we saw a part of the park and a viewing tower, as well as their devices for capturing birds.



Overnight stay in the city Augustow.

27. 9. 2017 (Wednesday)



After an hour drive we arrived at the Biebrza National Park, where we were welcomed by Artur Wiatr, who presented their park, its geographical features, and two projects concerning the restoration of river systems (Restoration of the hydrological system in the Middle Basin in the Biebrza Valley. Phase I, LIFE09 NAT/PL/000258 and Restoration of hydrological system in the Middle Basin of the Biebrza

Valley. Phase II, LIFE13 NAT/PL/000050). He also showed us a video presentation of the project, which presents the issues and activities of the project nicely. After the presentation we viewed their promotional material, books, brochures, and souvenirs. We went to the field next. We saw the canal barriers, fish trails and thresholds, while learning a lot about the park, its staff and the problems they are facing. We saw the viewing platform and tower on the hill Wilcza Góra, then returned to the hotel in the evening.



Overnight stay in the city Augustow.

28. 9. 2017 (Thursday)

We drove 6 hours to Lublin, where we paid a visit to researcher Marcin Polak from the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. Mr Polak has dedicated a lot of his time to researching the Bittern and ringing specimens, which is why he collected a lot of information about them and tested various techniques for capturing them. His experiences are different from that of his Latvian colleagues, but together, they represent an excellent source of information for our project activities, especially for the establishment of a quiet zone for Bittern and telemetry of one specimen.



Overnight stay in the city Lublin.

29. 9. 2017 (Friday)

Journey home – we started travelling from Lublin at 4 AM and arrived home at 8 PM.