

NATURE FOR ALL

Wetlands and valuable landscapes for rural development

*Final report from the
Interreg III B BIRD Project 2004–2007*



Information to the Reader

This booklet can be seen as a kind of appetizer to look for a deeper understanding of results and strategies on the BIRD Project web sites. In this booklet, you will find some major themes, describing the project set-up and management as well as some major outputs from transnational Work Package activities. One of these themes is a “Comprehensive Strategy”, a kind of overall summary of the BIRD Project discussions on Rural Development. The booklet also contains summaries of a group of main reports, fully described in web attachments.

This booklet, including all appendices, can also be read and printed from www.eurowetlands.org

Abbreviations, used by authors in this booklet and in the BIRD Project web files:

BIRD – Acronym, for an EU Interreg III B, Baltic Sea Region Project, developing the use of “*Wetlands, Nature Reserves and Cultural Landscapes for Rural Development*”

BSR – Baltic Sea Region

CC – Country contacts

Interreg III B – An EU programme for regional development

JS – Interreg Joint Secretariat

LP – Lead Partner

MS – Milestone (6 month period)

NFC – National Financial Coordinator

RDP – Rural Development Programme

SC – Steering Committee

WIC – Wetland Information Centre

WP – Work Package

WPC – Work Package Coordinator

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Preface

The Interreg III B BIRD Project has come to an end but the results will remain. The participating neighbour countries around the Baltic Sea have demonstrated several common problems, strategies and solutions within the aim of rural development.

The increasing gap between cities and countryside is a challenge. New possibilities of employment and economic growth in rural areas are essential ingredients for the sustainable conservation and use of natural resources and landscape qualities.

Open European borders and an increasing focus on nature tourism are the basis for making areas with high natural and cultural value become resources for rural development. One important task for the project is to find the best possible balance between some competing factors.

- The balance between exploration and protection in sensitive areas
- The balance between public and private interests
- The balance between cooperation and competition among individual stakeholders operating in the same area

More than 40 reports have been published as a result of transnational cooperation between partners and external experts, all of which are listed in a web catalogue. More than 35 seminars, study tours, meetings and conferences have been arranged, covering a large number of beautiful and interesting areas in the BIRD Project countries. Demo sites, field installations and educational packages are ready to serve also external partners far beyond the BIRD Project areas, and for a long time to come.

During the project period, a very important and valuable network has been built involving partners, experts, stakeholders, authorities and entrepreneurs. Most project activities are the results of very ambitious guidance by activity coordinators, financial coordinators, country contacts, Steering Committee members and lead partner staff. To all of you, and last but not least to the Interreg Secretariat a warm thanks for valuable and pleasant cooperation and support.

Welcome to join the free use of BIRD Project results at

www.eurowetlands.org



Göran Bengtsson
Project Chairman



The BIRD Project – Introduction and Summary

Jan Lundegrén

BIRD is short for an EU Interreg III B, Baltic Sea Region Project, developing the use of “*Wetlands, Nature Reserves and Cultural Landscapes for Rural Development*”.

During 2003 many contacts were established around the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) discussing the common need for rural development, based upon nature and culture tourism in rural areas.

The problem

The population density in rural areas is decreasing in many regions around the Baltic Sea. With reduced population density, there is a risk for deterioration of local infrastructure, such as communications and transport, health care, education, local markets etc.

Furthermore, the reduced number of farmers and grazing cattle is a threat against valuable landscapes and biodiversity.

The possibilities

Rural areas, both forests and agricultural areas, still contain sites with very high qualities of beauty, biodiversity and culture. Wetlands, lakes and other nature reserves have become more and more attractive for nature tourism as a positive contrast to the dense and stressed life in growing cities and towns.

Today, all BSR nations have well-educated ecologists, biologists and archaeologists with university degrees, which provide good conditions for a sound and sustainable management of sensitive rural areas.

The inspiration

Early on, it became clear that all BSR nations have a large number of very interesting areas with high-quality biodiversity, landscape structures and cultural background. The potential for nature

tourism, connected to rural employment, was regarded as very positive.

Individual rural sites in the BIRD Project countries had made successful efforts to create local economic growth in areas with high nature qualities. One of those sites was Lake Hornborga in Sweden, and the obtained rural development in this area was one of the reasons for appointing the Västra Götaland County Administration as Lead Partner for an Interreg application.

The Interreg application

In February 2004, an application was submitted, covering 35 partners in six countries and a budget of nearly 4 million Euros including national co-financing. The co-financing was confirmed, partner by partner, through an official statement, linked to the application. The application was approved in June 2004. The complete application can be found through the link in Appendix 14, Catalogue. The financial and official start of the BIRD Project 3 years duration was August 14, 2004.

BIRD web site

For the day-to-day management of the BIRD Project, an administrative web site including a project e-mail system was set up. Here the transnational activities were posted, as well as the project budget and financial follow-up. This transnational website has had a growing importance for the project and partnership networking.

Project Results – a summary

In the following summary, we can only highlight some of the main results, the characteristic quality of which is their sustainability and applicability far outside the BIRD partnership:

- WP1 – A description of implemented local demo sites showing different methods for the conservation of sensitive nature areas.
- WP1 – A new methodology for purchasing nature services by involving local entrepreneurs, thus creating local employment and environmental commitment.
- WP2 – A cross-sectoral and bottom-up methodology for broad local involvement in the management of sensitive nature and culture areas.
- WP2 – A description of the potential use of EU RDP financial sources for the implementation of BIRD Project ideas.
- WP3 – A number of field installations for increased accessibility and information, also adopted for the disabled.
- WP3 – A pre-study on the installation of an international Wetland Information Centre at Lake Hornborga, Sweden.
- WP3 – A guideline for “Best Practice” in local field installations for accessibility and information to the public.
- WP4 – A common package of education and training material has been developed and published, regarding outdoor teaching, nature conservation and sustainable tourism.
- WP4 – Education and training activities has been implemented, touching hundreds of participants on many levels from school children to university students.
- LP – Three transnational conferences arranged in Sweden, Estonia and Finland respectively, involving in average 75 participants each.

The value of transnational networking must not be underestimated. All those involved in the BIRD Project, also external entrepreneurs, landowners and stake holders, now have a deeper understanding and a wider commitment to the value of sound management and good practice marketing of, as well as high accessibility to, rural nature and culture. ●



*The role of grazing cattle for the open landscape must not be underestimated
Photo: Jan Mogol*

BIRD Project Set-up

Johan Jannert

Background

Many attractive parts of the countryside are in rural areas where the population is decreasing, largely due to modern technologies in agriculture and forestry. Increased eco-tourism can become a source of employment and entrepreneurship in rural regions. Therefore, a professional and sustainable conservation of valuable landscape will be essential to creating good facilities and attractive events for visitors.



*New technology in agriculture and forestry has reduced the need for manpower in rural areas
Photo: Arne Jansson*

Partners

In 2003, contacts were established between organisations in the Baltic countries, and a transnational cooperation with the theme of rural development was agreed upon. The common idea for the partners was that they all saw high natural and cultural values in parts of the countryside where rural development was desirable. In February 2004, 35 partners from Baltic Sea countries decided to submit an Inter-reg application for a project named BIRD. In all partner areas there were municipalities and regions with bird rich wetlands, nature reserves and cultural surroundings very well suited for creating eco-tourism and rural development. The County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland, Sweden was the Lead Partner.

Work Packages

The BIRD activities carried out during the project period were organised in four different work packages:

WP1 MANAGEMENT: Strengthen experience among managers and experts of sustainable management and maintenance of wetlands and cultural landscapes.

WP2 SPATIAL PLANNING WITH A CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH: The task of the BIRD Project was to promote methods of cross-sectoral cooperation in sensitive wetland areas. Relevant vertical authorities, landowners and non-government organisations were involved in the process.

WP3 ACCESSIBILITY, INFORMATION AND MARKETING: Involvement of existing tourism infrastructure. Spreading of information and promoting eco-tourism and cultural tourism. Special focus on disabled.

WP4 EDUCATION: Education programmes produced for essential target groups, such as landowners, local entrepreneurs, schools and local population through a collaboration programme between stakeholders.

Three BIRD-conferences were organised during the project period in Sweden, Estonia and Finland respectively.

Organisation

A three level working method by partner, by nation and transnationally were organised. The idea of this organisation was to promote sustainable local results, influence by experience and knowledge from wider project networks. The transnational and cross-sectoral approach was promoted in all project activities. A work package coordinator was appointed for each work package. Within each work package, seminars and meetings were held in different partner countries. A combination of field studies and evaluation of documented experiences were the basis for best practices, in the efforts to create sustainable rural development in all project areas. Demonstration areas and micro-investments within the project were carried out to

illustrate good examples. For the national coordination of activities CC were appointed.

Financial Organisation

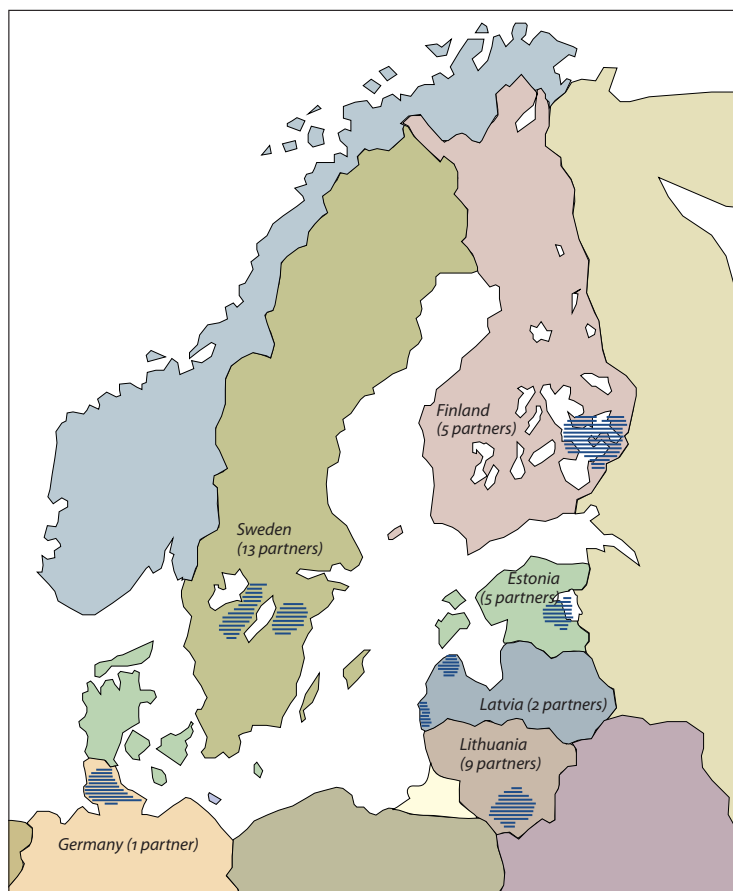
Obviously, the size of the project with 35 partners, 6 languages and 5 currencies laid claims on the financial management. Every invoice should be classified at correct partner, WP, budget line, etc. Furthermore, some partners have 25 % national co-financing and some 75 %. Our solution was that single partners had their own separate budget, and in each country a National Financial Coordinator was responsible for the financial administration. The audit reports from each country were sent to the LP auditor who signed the confirmation auditing report for the entire project. The total budget was nearly €4 million.

The budget structure, which was designed by

the JS, had to be adhered to by the project. All individual expenditures had to be attributed to partner, WP, MS and budget line. A budget line refers to costs for partner personnel, meetings, travel, external expertise, audit, small-scale investments, equipments and others.

Application Approved

An approval of the application was decided on 4 June 2004. On 4 October, a Subsidy contract was signed between the Interreg Secretariat and the Lead Partner. That was the main starting shot for the BIRD Project. The application is available in the catalogue on www.eurowetlands.org. ●



BIRD Project partners representing valuable areas in 6 Baltic Sea countries

BIRD Project Management

Jan Lundegrén

Project management depends on project set-up

The set-up of an Interreg project has a strong impact on the conditions for successful management. The larger the number of countries and partners is, the more the operative and financial coordination grows. The sharing of roles and responsibilities in project implementation must be clarified internally among all project partners, the sooner the better, and preferably during the procedure of application.

Management structure

A complex project needs a well-functioning management. The experiences from the BIRD Project tells us that at least the following demands must be fulfilled for a well-functioning management:

- In the project organization, there must be a responsible body for making decisions of principle concerning the whole project. The BIRD Project Steering Committee, containing one member per country, had this responsibility.
- The LP should organise an internal steering group with competence and capacity for overall operative and financial coordination.
- The responsibility for the full implementation of approved project activities is described in the Subsidy Contract between the Interreg JS and the LP. The sharing of this responsibility to partners must be described in signed contracts between the LP and every single project partner.
- The implementation of project activities should preferably be headed by a selected

person, one per WP, with the task to organize transnational cooperation. The WPC is also responsible for the regular reporting to the LP.

- In a project with many national partners a CC has an important role as a link between the LP, the WPC and the single partners.
- In a project with many different native languages and many different currencies involved, the financial coordination, including MS reporting and auditing should preferably be organised nationally.
- An information system should be established, so that all involved partners and external experts can have the full information on the progress of project activities, including information of coming transnational activities and financial follow up.

Last but not least, the formal and theoretical project organisation can never replace physical meetings between people involved in different lines of implementation. The networks, created by these meetings, seminars, conferences and study tours, will have a high value for the further development efforts for a long time after project closure.

Project starting point

This is automatically determined by the day when the first project expenditure is entered into the project books. After exactly 36 months the last project expenditure must be paid and booked. The conclusion is: "Don't rush the first booking. Try to finance small initial costs outside the project. The days you gain by not starting the project immediately after approval, are very valuable the closer you come to the fixed and final booking day."



WP1 coordinator Jouni Koskela (right) heading a field BIRD Project seminar in Sweden
Photo: Jan Mogol

Project changes

Remember that only once during the project period are you allowed to ask the Interreg for a correction of project activities and reallocation of project budget. This possibility must be saved as long as possible, but no later than a point where you can still fulfil the approved changes within the project period. The consumption of project expenditures among single partners is not always according to budget. The possible reallocation between partners calls for analysis and negotiations, often beyond what was calculated.

Operative management

It is a rather general observation that projects are “slow starters”. The time for selecting coordinators and organising management groups is often underestimated. There must also be a readiness to meet unexpected obstacles. As examples, we can mention the time consuming procedures to have legal permissions for some activities or for public purchasing investments and external experts.

Language mixture

All correspondence between LP and Interreg JS has to be in English. However, the problem is not all that easy. Many of the results from a project will be of great importance only when spread to national/regional/local users in participating countries. Therefore, do not underestimate the costs for national translation and dissemination when setting up the project budget.

Inventing the wheel all over again

All projects have a fixed durability, and new projects often start from the beginning with new staff members without wide experiences of Interreg rules and conditions. It is a good idea to discuss project management with more experienced colleagues or even with the Interreg JS staff members. Normally, the JS or sub secretariats are open for consulting, especially during the period of putting together an application. In the BIRD Project such consultations have been of great value especially for the LP. ●



Comprehensive Strategy for Rural Development

A Summary of BIRD Project Observations

Jan Lundegrén

Increased employment

In the BIRD Project, the main aim has been to develop strategies for using valuable and sometimes sensitive nature and culture areas as a base for rural development. We talk about rural development as a situation with increased employment, local financial growth and reduced migration of people to the cities, which do not return to the countryside.

Besides all the activities that we are obligated to implement in the approved BIRD Project we have been involved in several discussions with local leaders and politicians, experts on regional

economy, as well as local stakeholders, entrepreneurs and local population. From all our discussions we would like to present a number of conclusions under the title of *Comprehensive Strategy*, referring to a desire from Interreg JS that became a condition for the project.

Why rural development?

There is seldom a strict limit between rural areas and the surrounding countryside. The countryside itself shows a broad variety of properties such as infrastructure, employment branches, population density and population age pyramid. Also the exchange of goods, values and people between cities and countryside varies widely. Therefore the need for rural development must vary from one region to another. Some reasons for strengthening the rural areas can be mentioned.

- Sustainable conservation of natural resources is essential also to urban people. The knowledge and understanding of how to develop sustainable use of natural resources needs a certain number of trained people, responsible for the care of forests and arable land.
- If the population density in rural areas is reduced under a critical limit, the infrastructure, such as transport, communication, education, health care and local trading runs the risk of collapse. The financial misuse of established resources is obvious.
- In market-oriented societies, the rapid growth of cities can create social problems related to unemployment, shortage of housing, feelings of lost bearings, drug abuse, etc. Sometimes



Local entrepreneur installing BIRD Project investment using traditional material
Photo: Jan Lundegrén

such effects are the result of too quick migration from rural to urban areas.

- New ways of using the countryside, not only for biological production, are developing. Rural nature and culture tourism is rapidly growing all over the world, with a certain focus on areas that recently have been more or less closed or inaccessible. The use of nature has been more and more observed as a source for health rehabilitation, especially for urban people with stress syndromes.
- Sometimes rural areas have small or medium size enterprises. If a reduction in population density makes it more difficult to hire people, there is a risk for the survival of such enterprises.

Crucial criteria for good rural standards of living

A well-functioning rural region has reached a certain standard of living in a broad complex of facilities. To illustrate, we take the instance of a young family with school children and a regular need for reaching the nearest town centre. If that family is to have a realistic chance of staying on in the long run in the rural area, they will need the following facilities:

- Nursery for small children, so that both parents can be professionally active
- Schooling at a reasonable distance from home to the level of 10–12 years of age
- Good roads and daily public transport to the nearest town
- Good telecommunications including broadband web access
- Daily postal service
- Local market for food and other everyday goods

BIRD Project observations

It has been clearly demonstrated that areas with high nature qualities, also protected areas, is a good base for rural development. The best results in increased employment comes from a combination of efforts in nature protection, cross-sectoral cooperation, increased marketing and improving of service qualities.

Strategic ideas

The following ideas are strategic, in the sense that they are part of a complex of rural efforts where societal investments cooperate with private initiatives (public-private partnerships).

PROMOTE QUALITY. An operation aiming at the sound management of sensitive natural areas must be based upon the best technology. Take great care when describing the sustainable end result. Is it the highest biodiversity? Is it the protection of a certain species? Is it creating the most beautiful landscape? Is it economic sustainability by fishing, boating or what? Collect and repeat “best practice” when planning sustainable installations in the countryside. Do not forget to calculate costs for future maintenance.

THINK CROSS-SECTORALLY. Be careful when monitoring all public and private interests involved in a planned activity. Avoid conflicts by giving early and true information. Accept local experience, as well as external expertise. Do not forget existing NGOs.

LEARN from successful experiences from previously implemented activities. Make study tours, talk to innovative people where activities have been successful. Read and learn from the BIRD “Best Practice” manual.

USE EU FUNDING. All EU member states now have Rural Development Programmes for the period 2007–2013. Parts of these programs are eligible for local activities in rural areas, not only for farmers.



*Designing bird towers is a cross-sectoral task
Photo: Matti Kemppinen*

COOPERATE. More and more visitors want a package of events, accommodation, food, transport services, culture, social activities, etc. For a single stakeholder, it can be very difficult to offer all parts within his own enterprise. So start cooperating, make deals about sharing activities, responsibilities, marketing and incomes. In many countries EU/RDP funding is available also for that planning process. Prefer local building material.

USE LOCAL RESOURCES. When implementing public activities, such as wetland management, or building trails, fences, towers, bird hides, information stands, parking places, etc. use local entrepreneurs and involve their experiences early in the planning process.

COMPETENCE is an important part of quality. Train local managers, local guides, and local tourist hosts. Ask local colleges to start nature and culture tourism courses.

INVOLVE THE DISABLED. An ageing, and sometimes wealthy, European population loves

to travel, even to areas never visited before. Prepare field installations and tourism services also for the disabled; experience shows that growing numbers of visitors will result – visitors prepared to pay for available services.

MAKE A PROFIT. Make reliable estimates of the income from single tourism activities. Remember that the visitor is often prepared to pay for an event that is an ordinary daily routine for local people.

PROMOTE NEW ATTITUDES. Local nature tourism is something new and unknown to many people. Sometimes attitudes have to evolve. Here, experience tells you that the target groups for such training and information can be school children, teachers, stakeholders, or even tourism experts or biologists. Let local conditions guide you. The BIRD Project has developed training packages for different target groups.

USE THE WEB. Today's nature and culture tourists, being they individuals, families or tour groups, all use the web to find information about



*Also disabled have the right – and the pleasure – to enjoy outdoor living
Photo: Tiina Niikonen*



*The care of wetlands is a professional task where local farmers and their grazing cattles can play important roles
Photo: Jouni Koskela*

interesting sites, events and services. Find good Internet solutions for information and marketing of local attractions. Consider EU/RDP funding for that purpose.

Expected sustainable results

An increased rural nature and culture tourism will offer a number of advantages to the visitors, to the host families and to society as a whole, also beyond the positive importance of increased employment, incomes and welfare. Some examples:

- A more professional and more sustainable care of high quality areas will be obtained through better methodology, better information and a locally designed target group education.
- Urban people get a deeper understanding of rural life conditions, and the other way around.
- Democratic decision-making must be based on knowledge, also about the conditions for

minorities, like rural people. Rural tourism will improve that knowledge.

- Rural tourism will increase the understanding of the importance of farmers for food production (please don't smile, a lot of citizens today believe that food comes from the supermarket) and for landscape maintenance.
- The role of arable land for bio-energy production will be discussed more on a professional basis, which requires a better understanding of biomass production.
- Climate change is happening, and is inevitably creating a debate about the sustainable use of natural resources, like arable land, forests and fresh water. Today, the gap between the cities and the countryside is an obstacle to that debate. Rural tourism can bridge over that gap.



Sustainable management of wetlands

Jouni Koskela

Introduction

Bird-rich wetlands are complex ecosystems whose *restoration* and sustainable management requires knowledge of the hydrology, biology and ecology of the wetland and of the drainage area. Many formerly valuable wetlands are threatened by overgrowth. Very slight changes in conditions can rapidly turn shallow lakes into peatlands. Sustainable management of wetlands promotes the protection of habitat types and species alike, concerning both breeding sites for birds and staying areas for migrating birds.

The unfavourable development of wetlands is generally caused by factors like eutrophication, land uplift, and lowering of the water level. During the spring thaw, whole wetland areas may be flooded, whereas after dry periods only very small areas of open water may remain.

In most cases the objective of the restoration is to increase the areas of open water and to stop overgrowing. The most suitable habitats for many waterfowl species have a mosaic structure, a mixture of stretches of open water alternating with vegetation-covered islands. Restoration of the wetland starts by compiling initial hydrological, ecological, avifauna and vegetation data. The restoration plan is drawn up on the basis of the objectives.

After restoration, bird wetlands require *maintenance* in order to preserve their diversity. The success of the restoration has to be assessed by monitoring the avifauna, vegetation and water quality, and in some cases other animal groups like butterflies and dragonflies.

Habitat restoration work and management guidelines must be carefully planned in close cooperation with landowners. Nature conservation objectives should be harmonised with other land use objectives, through land use and management planning.

The bird rich wetlands have become more and more important socio-economically. Bird watching has in many places become the most important activity of local nature tourism. By restoration and sustainable maintenance of wetlands, the touristic use of ornithologically valuable areas has developed strongly.

The objective of Work Package 1 was to strengthen experience among managers and experts of sustainable management and maintenance of wetlands and cultural landscapes and to find the best ways of preserving and managing sensitive and rich landscapes.

The types of habitat restoration and rehabilitation measures

WATER LEVEL REGULATION The restoration of the water level of the wetland can be carried out by increasing the water level, or in some cases by lowering the level. Submerged dams can be built in streams that drain wetlands, in order to raise water levels to the desired height. A stable water or slowly decreasing level is important during the breeding season of the birds. When the water level is increased, there must be no risk of flood damage.

GRAZING Grazing by e.g. cattle or deer makes meadows more appropriate as resting places for migrant as well as breeding birds. In sites where grazing have increased the numbers of resting waders and ducks also have increased.

CLEARING UP Mowing and hay making make meadows more appropriate as resting places for migrant birds. The numbers of resting waders and ducks have increased in most of the areas. A manager has to consider what time of the year is best for mowing.

MOWING AND HAY MAKING Mowing and hay making make meadows more appropriate as resting places for migrant birds. The numbers of resting waders and ducks have increased in most of the areas. A manager has to consider what time of the year is best for mowing.

THE REMOVAL OF AQUATIC VEGETATION Aquatic vegetation can be removed where there are still considerable areas of open water left. Vegetation needs to be cleared several times before impacts become evident. The clearance of aquatic vegetation can also help to prevent overgrowth in wetlands restored in other ways.

FILLING OF DITCHES Trees are removed to reduce the loss of water via transpiration, to recreate more natural conditions and encourage marshland species to return. The impact of habitat restoration often becomes evident after a few years.

DREDGING Winter dredging can create smaller stretches of open water in otherwise overgrown areas, and smaller islands of vegetation can be purposely left in such pools to provide nesting sites. Dredging work involves considerable expense and expertise, but can be used to complement other habitat restoration methods.

REDUCING THE NUMBER OF SMALL PREDATORY MAMMALS Alien mammals, like mink, raccoon dog and muskrat have settled in many wetlands. Predator species will decline breeding success of waterfowl. Should hunting cease, the predator populations will grow and the results of the earlier campaigns will rapidly be negated. ●



*Ancient lake drainage and increased nutrition leakage has created large and complicated need for wetland restoration
Photo: Arunas Pranaitis*

Examples of management measures

Jouni Koskela

Lake Hornborga

The lake is a large post-glacial wetland, about 10 000 years old. Successive agricultural drainage projects between 1805 and 1935 lowered the lake with almost 2,0 metres and reduced the extent of wet grassland around the lake. During 1983 to 1995 a restoration took place and water level rose with almost 1 metre.

When water levels were achieved in 1995 almost 600 ha of arable land were destroyed as farmland and turned to wet grassland. Most of these were planned as moving and grazing areas for farmers in the surroundings.

In the BIRD Project, different kinds of machinery techniques were used to improve or restore the conditions for some of the wet grasslands that do not have sufficient management to attract wet grassland birds, such as wading birds. To take away old stumps and emergent vegetation, such as reed, a special amphibious caterpillar

was used and the material was used for building bird nest islands. Trees and bushes have overcrowded another area. The trees were up to 6 m tall. The grass vegetation consists of big tussocks. To reduce the number of moments when restoring the wet grassland, just one big cultivator was used and linked to a common tractor.

Svartåmynningen Nature Reserve

Svartåmynningen Nature Reserve at Lake Roxen is situated in Östergötland in south-eastern Sweden. The wet meadows of Svartåmynningen form the second largest area of grazed fresh water meadows in Sweden. A major task for the management of the nature reserve is the grazing. In order to restore overgrown parts of the wet

meadows, they are treated with cross-country vehicles with rotators.

Sjöbo-Knäppan Nature Reserve

Since the 1970s, bushes have covered the lime marshes of Sjöbo-Knäppan in Motala, Sweden. Although some efforts have been made to restore the marshland, it is still in great need of restoration. There are plans for restoring the wetland, ranging from creating open marshland to leaving areas with reed and bushes. The area is fenced to facilitate grazing.



Lake Pien-Rautjärvi

Lake Pien-Rautjärvi is situated in Parikkala in south-eastern Finland. Together with the surrounding area, it is valuable for nature protection and landscape preservation. The general problem has been overgrowth of bushes and trees along the shores. Aquatic vegetation has grown harmfully abundant, due to a considerable amount of nutrients transported by the streams. Management measures have included mowing and clearing of bushes, willows and birches in late summer. The raising of the water level in the summer and the restoration of ditches has been

► BIRD partners discussing moving or grazing in a calcareous fen
Photo: Jouni Koskela



A rotator for successful removing of tussocks
Photo: Dan Nilsson

accomplished. Mammals alien to Finland, like minks and raccoon dogs, have also been caught with traps.

Linnansaari National Park

Linnansaari National Park is situated in eastern Finland, in a part of the largest lake in the country, Lake Saimaa. With its hundreds of islands and broad open waters, it is a paradise for



boaters. Sheltered by the islands, lives the most famous inhabitant of Linnansaari, the Saimaa Ringed Seal (*Phoca hispida saimensis*). Also one of the densest populations of the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) is found in the area. In Linnansaari

National Park surveys of birds, bats, butterflies, plants and mosses were carried out, which gave guidance to the management plan.

Gruber Lake meadows

Gruber Lake meadows in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, is an example of water level regulation as a management method. Temporary surface water areas are built for migrating birds by re-establishing wetlands, and a large ditch has been dug below sea level. Shallow ponds are established for waders, white storks and cranes. Galloway cattle are grazing on the meadows all year round.

Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve

Marshes surrounding the Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve, located in central Lithuania, began to be drained at the beginning of 1900s, due to technical drainage projects and regulation of the Dovinė river. Lake vegetation will be removed and the wet meadows will be managed by mowing the reed. ●

◀ *Surveying of key species gives essential information for management planning. Chequered Blue (*Scolitantides orion*) lives on sunny rocks in Linnansaari National Park*
Photo: Teemu Uotila



BIRD Project demo site for clearance of aquatic vegetation by a reed cutter
Photo: Argaudas Stoškus

Sustainable Wetland Planning

Jens Rasmussen

Introduction

Conservation acts influence not only to the nature but also to the society around the maintained areas. Preservation of bird-rich areas demands continuous interaction with the rural business community at stake. Planning for sustainable wetlands must therefore meet the needs of these interactions.

In all BIRD Project countries the planning systems are highly developed and legitimate. The efficiency of the planning systems is also undoubtedly relatively high. The BIRD Project mostly relies on the will of the administration of the planning and managing systems to improve the regional planning processes. The well organized system produces simultaneously both benefits and disadvantages.

main idea of functionality is to bring about a rapid solution, based on expert knowledge. The reflective planning aims at a group decision, after communicating with actors involved.

The new contractualisation

In the case study report on the BIRD Project WP2 activities, we state that the experiences of the project actors indicate that there is a need to renew operation patterns. By doing so in the right way, all actors and objectives can benefit, and the contradiction between nature conservation and other rural development work can diminish. In this respect, most of the project actors touch upon most of the central ideas of “the new contractualization”. The justice is not explicitly mentioned, but one can read it in between the lines (implicitly) in several cases.

In our discussions we have used Eistos and Palviainens preliminary report (Eisto & Palviainen 2005, p.22–26) that introduced the idea of “the new contractualisation”. The main four concepts are: communication, trust (confidence), justice and the fact that all development activities, or other activities, must be seen as parts of a continuum and that all measures, projects etc. have a dynamic nature. Furthermore, it focuses on that all parties in the process actually are accomplishing what they agree.

BIRD Projects main recommendations on sustainable planning for rural development in wetland areas:

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONTEXT It is not possible to make an universal model that outlines the steps of planning

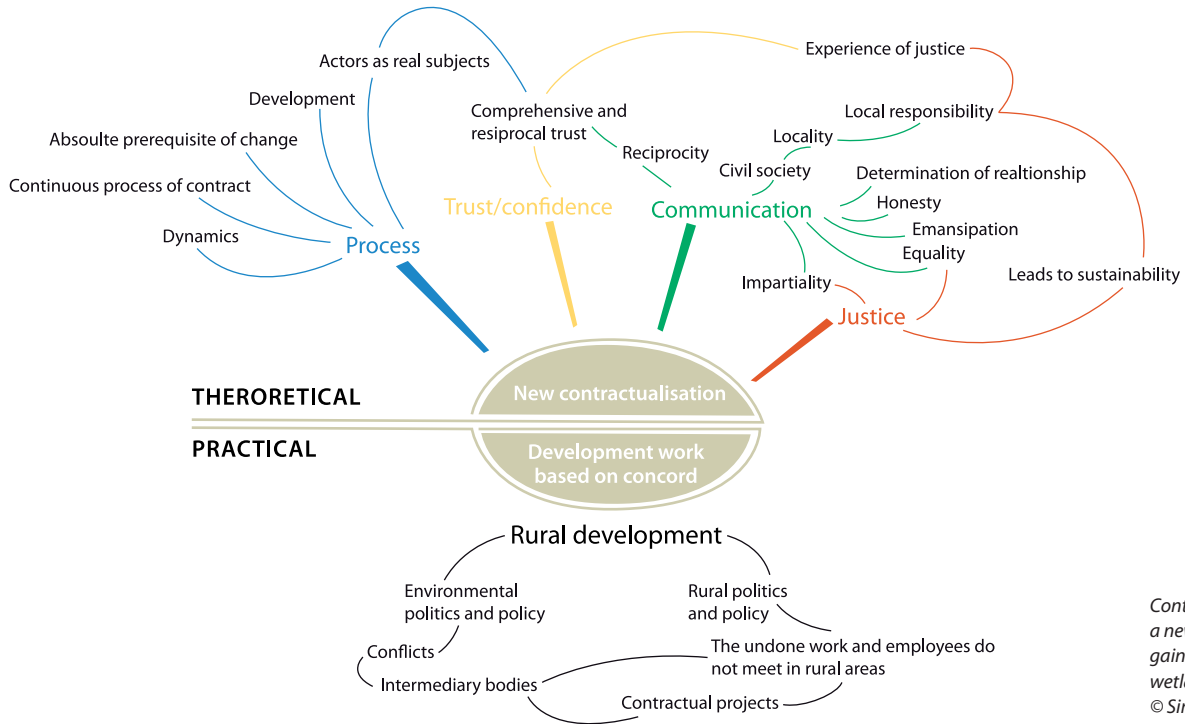
RIGIDITY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES Rigidity must be converted into flexibility, before there is potentiality for reflexive and communi-



Cross-sectoral planning means involvement of many different authorities, NGOs and stakeholders
Photo: Kerly Ilves

From our work we draw the following conclusions: The traditional model of planning (functionalism) is more limited, rigid and less empowered than the reflective planning. The

The New Contractualisation



cative planning processes. Above all, this is the task and duty of administrative bodies.

CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH There has to be communication also between different public bodies, not only between authorities (government, municipality etc.) and people (enterprises, organisations, villages etc.)

NETWORKING, COOPERATION If the actors are willing to participate and if they feel to achieve a real communication, they are more enthusiastic to build up other relationships, as well. The networks do not develop by themselves, but the actors must be willing to make them up.

CONFLICTS It is essential to try to identify the ongoing potential conflicts and to find mechanisms for solving them. If serious steps are taken in cooperative direction, many conflicts can be

avoided, but there is no way to avoid all disagreements.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING The educational and training efforts must be innovative and varied (nuanced).

PARTICIPATION The participation is not only a matter of involvement, but also an issue of large-scale development, even though it is not always easy to engage people within the planning and decision making processes.

KEY-PERSONS ARE DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS The possibility to take on politically active persons in key-positions of the project, must be made use of. This will guarantee that there are direct relationships with municipal officials and representatives of authorities. ●

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EU Rural Development Programmes

Sara Midheden Brink

New policy for rural development

In 2007 a new programme period for the European Union rural development policy started in accordance with the new strategic guidelines for rural development adopted by the European Commission. These guidelines set out a strategic approach and a range of options on which the member states have created their national Rural Development Programmes (RDP) for 2007–2013. The policy is based on the Gothenburg and Lisbon protocols on sustainability and competitiveness in the economies and following the fundamental reform of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP).

The new rural development strategy implies a focus on three different areas with a thematic axis corresponding to each core objective:

AXIS 1 – Improving the competitiveness of agricultural and forestry sector

AXIS 2 – Improving the environment and the countryside

AXIS 3 – Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

The three thematic axes are complemented by a «methodological» axis:

AXIS 4 – The LEADER Axis

with a strategy on building local capacity for employment and diversification dedicated to the LEADER approach.

For the new programming period The European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) was created to cover all rural development measures in one single fund. The existence of a single fund and a single set of programming, financing, reporting and control rules will simplify considerably the delivery of the policy.

The total EU budget of community support for rural development for the period 2007–2013 is 77,66 billion euros.



*Small-scale farming has for centuries been base for open landscapes and rich biodiversity
Photo: Johan Jannert*



Community support for rural development by the BIRD Project member countries 2007–2013:

Schleswig-Holstein	238 million euros
Estonia	715 million euros
Lithuania	1 743 million euros
Sweden	1 826 million euros
Finland	2 080 million euros

EU co-financing rates of the programmes would be at axis level, with a minimum of 20 % and a maximum of 50 % (75 % for Estonia and Lithuania). For axis 2 and the Leader Axis the maximum rate would be 55 % (80 % for Estonia and Lithuania), expressing the EU priority attached to these axes.

Impact on BIRD Project ideas

The RDPs hold considerable opportunities for the development and implementation of the BIRD Project ideas. Examples of measures suitable for this purpose are:

- Skills acquisition. Advising farmers on the preservation of an open, vibrant agricultural landscape with its natural and cultural assets and environmental protection
- Agri-environmental measures
- Support for maintenance of valuable natural and cultural environments in the agricultural landscape
- Support of biodiversity and cultural heritage in semi-natural grazing lands, mown meadowland and wetlands
- Diversification into non-agricultural activities
- Support for creation and development in micro-enterprises
- Support for encouragement of rural tourism services in rural areas
- Training and information measures
- Skills acquisition and animation measures for the preparation and implementation of a local development strategy ●

◀ Artists and art galleries are valuable ingredients in a living countryside
Photo: Arto Hämäläinen



Horse riding for urban people, a contribution to the understanding between the cities and the countryside
Photo: Beate Lezius





Photo: Jan Lundegrén

Sustainable Tourism

Klara Börjesson

Tourism is an important part of a country's economic life and development. Strengthening a country's attractiveness and building a tourism industry, which is competitive in the long term, contributes to sustainable growth, increased employment and greater long-term profitability.

Sustainable thinking

"If an activity is sustainable, it can go on forever" – sustainable ecological, economic and social development can be summarised as simply as that. Sustainable thinking starts from the bottom up and is based on local commitment and understanding of the conditions of others. Ruthless exploitation of the environment and short-term economic thinking are the absolute opposite of sustainability. Perhaps another quote can clarify the preferred approach: "I am interested in the future. I will spend the rest of my life there."

► *Horse tourism becomes more and more attractive. Well organised it is profitable for the rural operator*
Photo: Lisa Nestorson

Preserving our heritage

Sustainable tourism is a question of maintaining the values that we have been entrusted, to manage them for present and the future. It is about choosing to think in the long term, rather than the short term. It is a question of giving generation after generation the chance to experience places, smells, tastes and sounds as you yourself would want to experience them.

Sustainability is a prerequisite for the development of all tourism.

Information and Marketing

TARGET GROUPS We often consider the inhabitants of large European cities to be an important target group for marketing of destinations and travel. Although Scandinavian



travellers will increase in numbers, countries such as the Netherlands and Poland will be of great importance. We will also see increased travel from inhabitants of the eastern Baltic region.

Demography will probably not determine who will visit our lakes and wetlands. Instead, it will be a question of lifestyle and values, of travelling which focuses on themes with a mixed content of nature and culture.

Within the BIRD Project a couple of visitor surveys have been carried through and a number of reports with analysis of the market and existing networks.

MARKETING CHANNELS Currently, many countries and destinations use traditional marketing and sales channels in order to get their

Local food tradition in nice environment is a popular and attractive concept
Photo: Jan Mogol



message across, i.e. advertisements in newspapers, buses and trams, or brochures and hoardings. However, ultimately everything points to the Internet becoming the obvious information and sales channel.

A joint virtual tourist office – a common public platform for project partners has been created within the BIRD Project. Participating partners receive both a shared and an individual information and marketing channel on a flexible web portal.

PR AND THE MEDIA are other important supplementary channels in the non-Nordic markets.

As Internet use increases dramatically, so does interest in broadening one's knowledge before,

during and after a trip. Travel guides and books on various subjects supplement the dynamic information visitors can access on the net. During the BIRD Project a number of individual web pages, brochures, guide books have been produced. Another important complement is the hospitality on location, i.e. experienced guides and other “ambassadors” who enrich the travel experience in a knowledgeable, pleasant way. In order to work with the hospitality the BIRD-partners have created education programmes, checklists and study tours. ●

Bird watchers are an increasing group of tourists. They are not afraid to travel far, for visiting new exciting areas
Photo: Jan Lundegrén



Accessibility

Klara Börjesson

Accessibility must apply to everyone, even disabled people. Once accessibility is possible for the disabled, excellent conditions are ensured for others with special needs, e.g. elderly people and families with children. The question of accessibility affects us all, as most of us at some point in our lives will need some support, for instance to get out into the countryside. This obviously applies to public spaces, but companies that establish themselves in the area must also be accessible.

Increased accessibility as a strong attraction

Sometimes we talk about “green medicine”, meaning the healing time spent in natural surroundings. Nature experiences, such as bird-rich wetlands, are something of a retreat and an opp-

portunity to recharge the batteries, not least for city people. Increased accessibility to nature and cultural areas therefore has a strong attraction and leads to increased travel, new companies and more jobs. Accessibility awareness is not the same thing as volume tourism. The sensitivity of the area determines how best to solve the question of access and demand.

A disabled person must be able to enjoy the area without help or the risk of accidents. If you create a facility that functions well for a disabled person, you are guaranteed excellent conditions for anyone else using it. For instance, a hiking path that is easy to walk on and has benches where you can stop and rest will be enjoyed by the elderly and families with prams. It is also important for information to be available on



*Also bird towers can be designed with increased accessibility for disabled people
Photo: Merja Koivula-Laukka*



*Man-made trails gives an exclusive accessibility to wetlands and also a valuable protection of sensitive areas
Photo: Jan Lundegrén*

the degree of accessibility and what groups of disabled it will benefit the most. This creates confidence and reduces the risk of unpleasant situations. It is often the minor details that determine whether accessibility has been achieved or not.

Small-scale Investments

It has been an urgent task within the BIRD Project to evaluate, develop and perform good and sustainable quality solutions, as demonstration installations for wide application within and around the project areas. The BIRD Project has brought about discussions, development and realisation of technical installations, where a good balance between accessibility and information for visitors on the one hand, and sustainable protection of sensitive and valuable areas on the other, had to be achieved.

The small scale investments in the BIRD Project, such as bird-watching towers and platforms,



*Read by yourself or listen to a guide. Both options can often be combined in the same installation
Photo: Jan Lundegrén*

trails, information signs etc., have been designed with respect to existing transnational experience, complementary aims of accessibility and information, local building traditions, sustainable management, cost-effective construction etc. ●



Education, Training and Dissemination

Annie Jonsson



▲ The “reading” of a landscape is a matter of the reader’s growth, interests and education
Photo: Tomas Jonsson

In the communication era, education and training play a vital role. Moreover, continuous training is needed. Society and markets are endlessly changing, and it is necessary to update and upgrade skills.

for our target groups wetland managers, school teachers, guides and tourism entrepreneurs.

Training Programmes

Local training programmes adapted to the needs of target groups and areas were held. Nature and culture were the central words for the training of the different target groups and for the content. Ideas and inspiration have been shared among participants on BIRD Project conferences, study tours and via email contacts.



“// To be able to host visitors and guests in our area and to give them good guiding, a high level of competence is essential. It is very important that the visitors are well taken care of, in a professional way and get the information they expect – and hopefully more than that. The aim is a satisfied guest that would like to stay a little longer, return back later and recommend others to visit the area. //”

Gunilla Adebahr, guide
Photo: Annie Jonsson

Objectives

To achieve the commitment to use Nature for economic development without damaging ecosystems, there is a need to strengthen the awareness, sensibility and understanding of the local cultural, historical and natural heritage among local people. Education and training has been one tool in the BIRD Project to communicate this among people living and working in our target areas. Competence and knowledge is also essential



Identified education needs for three main target groups
© Annie Jonsson

Achievements

There has been fantastic and diverse education and training efforts. Many people have participated, and also ask for more. A main result, besides increasing sensibility, knowledge and competence, is the new networks that have been formed among people during these training activities. These are results that hopefully are sustainable, and will last after the closure of the BIRD Project. Networking is a good way to exchange experiences and gather competence leading to higher quality and often increased business.



Pedagogical Methods

The motivation to learn and search for knowledge is highly influenced by emotions and practical engagement. Learning by doing, outdoor education seminars and workshops where people are activated have therefore been an important pedagogical tool.

Education and Training Material

Good examples and material have been compiled into a common education and training package in English. The material is available to everyone on the website (www.eurowetlands.org). Great effort has been put in to make the material easy to read and of practical use. Since the project has been working with many target groups, the material is of different character and divided into three themes: School projects, Sustainable tourism and Wetland management.

The school project package contains teachers' guides for Wetland lessons for over 20 projects including:

- Purpose of the lesson
- Necessary equipment for the lesson
- Group size and duration
- How to carry out the lesson

The sustainable tourism package contains information on what sustainable tourism is about and good examples with case studies on how to work with sustainable tourism, for example:

- Building in Nature
- Networking
- Accessibility
- Checklists for good hospitality

The wetland management package contains information from a number of wetland sites including:

- Area description with biological values
- Restoration efforts
- Management strategies
- Evaluation and experiences ●

◀ Historical remainings often attract visitors by their ritual magic
Photo: Johan Jannert

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Young forest explorers – nature protectors of tomorrow?
Photo: Argaudas Stoškus



The Web Appendices

During the BIRD Project more than 40 reports have been produced, several websites have been constructed and a lot of other activities have been carried out. A selection of those activities is presented on the following pages. A short summary describes the activity. If you want to read the whole appendix go to www.eurowetlands.org and you will find the report.

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Photo: Henrik Roos

The BIRD Project Areas and System for Protection

Ivar Puura

The objective of the study was to assemble the information on the project sites suggested by the participating countries, based on the feedback from the project partners. The report includes the reviews of the nature protection system in the six countries and background information on objectives and challenges in wetland management. Altogether 26 project sites – 4 in Estonia, 2 in Lithuania, 2 in Germany, 12 in Sweden, 4 in Finland and 2 in Latvia – are characterised in detail. Information about the larger sites was collected using RAMSAR information sheets modified for the project purpose and for the smaller sites by a questionnaire compiled for this purpose.

These reviews allow the comparison between management approaches and experiences in areas of very different background and origin; from nature conservation areas including natural

lakes and bays in the Baltic States and Finland to artificially created wetland systems attractive for birds and bird watchers like Lake Hornborga in Sweden and Oldenburger Graben in Germany.

From the country reports of the project sites, it is evident that among the central issues of the wetland management are biodiversity conservation, and constraining and optimising the number of visitors to sites with restricted access, where visiting is allowed for research purpose only. In some areas, environmental education for small groups is acceptable, but not mass tourism that could devastate biodiversity. The study makes available the information on the project sites that allows analysis of how management can raise the value of each area and what constraints are necessary in developing certain areas.

www.eurowetlands.org



Qualities and restrictions in protected areas must be easily demonstrated
Photo: Johan Jannert

Wetland Web

Mats Rosengren

Nature requires well functioning wetlands! The need of restoration and management is vast. How do we best use limited resources? Which methods and machinery are appropriate? How do we spread knowledge, experience and inspiration? How to get in contact with each other?

Wetlands have always been an important part of Nature. The traditional use for grazing and mowing created good environments for birds. Most wetlands today have been negatively influenced by human activity and many have been drained. Overgrowth of bushes and trees is the result of lack of grazing and mowing.

During the last decades, wetlands have become more interesting for tourism and an important part of rural development. How to develop this and integrate it with the management of the wetlands? The right investments in infrastructure for tourists can give fantastic experiences. We need constructions with good

accessibility for visitors. Security, economy, life span, maintenance and supervision are important issues that should be treated already during the planning process.

Nature is also very useful for education and training in many subjects. The rich life in wetlands can be used in many ways. Understanding of the importance of both wetlands and water is easy to achieve.

The natural venue for these questions will be the Wetland Web, which will stand on four legs: restoration, management, tourism and education/training. Focus will, to start with, be on shallow bird rich lakes. The target group for the Wetland Web is people actively working with wetlands in different ways. Work on the Wetland Web will continue after the BIRD Project. It will be a long-lasting venue that keeps on growing.

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*Rotation of tussocks,
one of the management
methods described on
the Wetland Web
Photo: Jan Mogol*

Embankments around Lake Roxen

Stig Svenmar

The southern and western shores of Lake Roxen are very flat. Vast areas are therefore embanked to gain arable land. The County Administrative Board of Östergötland has made a study to get better knowledge about the total extent of embankments around Lake Roxen. The study includes a documentation of the condition of the embankments today and how the owners of the embanked land look upon the future of the embankments and their utilisation.

The report presents a compilation of basic data for 23 embankments. Strengths and weaknesses of the embankments are described. All embankments need maintenance. How the management is organized in practice, and also in the jurisdiction, is also described.

Conversion to wetland?

For obvious reasons embankments are potential wetlands. Some of the studied embankments have even been converted to wetlands again.

The future outlook for the embanked areas is, of course, a very important matter for the landowners and farmers. At least one person in each embankment has personally been interviewed. There are many things to take into consideration.

Some of the issues discussed during the interviews are:

- Anxiety about dike height
- Organogenic soil eroded through cultivation
- Maintenance of pumping stations
- Suitable crops for embanked areas
- Future status and economy for energy crops
- Doubts about wetland ventures

It is technically very simple to convert an embanked area to wetland. Whether one would today convert one's embanked arable land to wetland was a matter that nobody wanted to directly recommend. On the other hand this option needs to be considered having in mind the fact that many embankments are not secure against extremes of high water. Large-scale capital investment can be needed to restore the dikes to an effective state.

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*The former Åby – Ulberstad statutory embankment scheme has been converted to wetland
Photo: Sverker Kärrsgård*

The EU Rural Development Programme 2000–2006 – Implications for BIRD Project Ideas

Stina Levin

The study focus on the possibilities of supporting wetlands, cultural landscapes and nature reserves. These were discussed in the BIRD Project in connection to the measures in the rural development programmes. This is done through a description of the existing rural development programmes for the years 2000–2006 (or 2003/2004–2006 for the new EU Member States) – and related measures – of the BIRD Project member countries: Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) and Sweden.

The report also discuss the implications of the new strategic guidelines for rural development (new strategy for rural development) adopted by the EU. These guidelines set out a strategic approach and a range of options, which member

states could use in their national rural development programmes.

A comparison of the different programmes has been made. Probably the results of this comparison will hold – to a certain extent – even for the new programmes during the period 2007–2013. Information on the strategic emphasis of the programmes give indications to this effect. Still, for BIRD Project purposes an update of the measures is needed when the new programmes are available.

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*Food and accommodation facilities can be attractive in rural areas
Photo: Johan Jannert*

Introduction to EU Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 – Implications for BIRD Project Ideas

Sara Midheden Brink

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) has a substantial influence on the implementation of the BIRD Project ideas. Knowing the tools for financial support of the rural development measures, can be of great value in the realization of those ideas.

The new rural development strategy implies a focus on three different areas with a thematic axis corresponding to each core objective, and a fourth methodological axis with a strategy on building local capacity for employment and diversification (Leader).

AXIS 1 – Improving the competitiveness of agricultural and forestry sector

AXIS 2 – Improving the environment and the countryside

AXIS 3 – Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

AXIS 4 – The LEADER Axis

The study describes the main outlines of the new programme period for the European Union rural development policy that started in 2007.

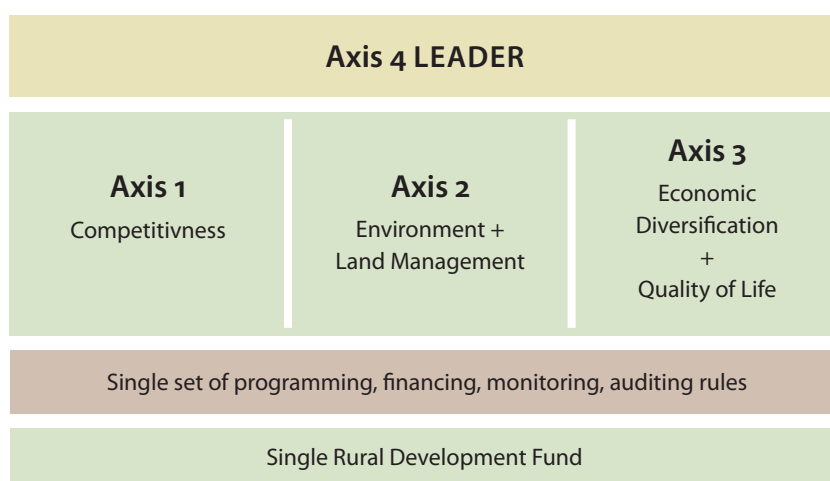
It also contains a summary of the RDP 2007–2013 of the BIRD Project member countries: Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) and Sweden.

The strategic outlines of the RDPs of those countries are presented and follows by a presentation of the financial plan of each country and some statistic information that can help when comparing the figures.

For each country examples of measures in the national RDP, useful for the implementation of the BIRD Project, are presented.

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Rural Development 2007–2013



In all EU member states the RDP have the same main structure of priorities

Combining Sustainable Rural Development and Wetland Conservation Case Studies

Simo Palviainen

In the case study report, which analyses six of the BIRD Project WP2 activities, we state that many things in the experiences of the project actors allude to the facts that there is a need to renew some operation patterns. By doing so in the right way, this can benefit all actors and objectives, by diminish the contradiction between nature conservation and other rural development work. In this respect, most of the central ideas of “the new contractualization” (see Eisto&Palviainen 2005) are brought out by the project actors. Commitment, cooperation, trust, transparency and the dynamic nature of the development work, are all emphasized. Justice is not explicitly mentioned,

but one can read it in between the lines (implicitly) in several cases.

It can clearly be seen, communication and cooperation are on the top of the practices list. Learning and teaching were also emphasized a great deal. Hence, it was concluded that knowledge exchange, mutual understanding, openness and transparency are basic preconditions for successful nature conservation. This also means that connecting nature conservancy activities and other rural development work is the way to enhance the sustainable development actions in the field.

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*In wetland conservation, installations for visitors will promote rural development. BIRD Project installation in Parikkala municipality, Finland
Photo: Jan Lundegrén*

Successful Initiatives for Rural Development

Peep Leppik

The BIRD Project has studied and produced a report on “Successful initiatives in the field of rural planning for sustainable development”. The report describes nineteen successful initiatives around the Baltic Sea. The study clearly shows that successful rural development can and must consist of many different kinds of ideas and activities. In the long run, diversified initiatives give better and more sustainable development in social, ecological and economic terms.

The road that we travel to rural development can be tricky sometimes. Different ideas and initiatives must be connected and handled in the planning process. If we stay focused on the most important issues, we will succeed and reach our common goal of sustainable rural development.

Main goals for many of the successful initiatives in the report:

- Aiming simultaneously at nature conservation and rural economic development, especially in bird rich wetlands

- Restoring natural habitats/diversity and simultaneously developing quality tourism in bird-rich wetlands
- Developing tourism, ecological agriculture, cooperation networks, strengthening the community and sustaining traditional ways of life in other initiative areas, which have an effect of preserving cultural landscapes and biodiversity

The initiatives show that crucial for success is a well-working and coordinated cooperation between local people and actors, local and regional authorities, and institutions on other levels.

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We are not the first, and certainly not the last, who are creating open landscapes and become a part in rural development

*Ekornavallen, nearby Lake Hornborga, Sweden
Photo: Örjan Nilsson*

Spatial Planning and Rural Development – Good Practice, Better Policies

Simo Palviainen

The purpose of the study is to concentrate on 1) formulating the overview of the planning systems in Bird-countries, 2) mapping out the main trends of rural development and especially representing the best practices and best policies in rural development projects pertaining environmental issues.

In WISP an EU Interreg IIC-project many examples of good practices were presented that should be taken into serious consideration. In the working papers presented for BIRD Project, even more far-reaching ideas are expressed about planning and implementing development projects dedicated to combining the benefits of nature conservation and rural development.

This report presents a summary of Eistos and Palviainens preliminary report that introduced

the idea of “the new contractualisation”. The main four concepts are: *communication, trust (confidence), justice and process.*

An overall conclusion from the report states that planning goes from functionalism to reflectivity, and that it is not possible to make an universal model in outlining the steps of planning. Most of the core ideas of the best practice cases presented for this report, broadly agree with the ideas of “the new contractualisation”. In many cases, it is noticed that justice, processing, communicative actions and confidence should be integrated into the rural planning and other development measures.

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*Good infrastructure, like care and schools for children, is important for family life in rural areas
Photo: Jan Lundegrén*

Purchase of Ecosystem Services

Aune Ritola-Grahn

Preservation of bird-rich areas demands continuous interaction with the rural business community at stake. In order to promote sustainable wetland and rural development the municipality of Parikkala has carried out a WP2 BIRD Project for purchase of ecosystem services.

Acquisition announcements for invitation of tender and draft for an offer were made in spring 2006. Measures with environmental or entrepreneurship aspects were asked for, in areas Siikalahti and Pien-Rautjärvi catchment areas, for a total sum of 30 000 €.

Public meetings, individual information, phone service and meetings were being held.

The different offers were negotiated by a selection group (farmers, Metsähallitus, administration, Environmental centre, TE-keskus).

Local government made the decision for 10 offers with ca 29 000 €. Contracts were drawn and reports for measures, supervision, inspections and evaluating have been carried out.

Some conclusions:

- Voluntary and local work with environmental goals/objectives

- “Changing of thoughts”: One half of the work could be free of charge.
- If the BIRD Project can bring changes with some good, local examples, we are on the right way.
- Summer time inhabitants with land ownership: The free-time values and interests are sometimes contrary to ones of local inhabitants.
- During the BIRD Project: Learning from others may mean the necessity to change own project measures (“permit to become wise”).
- BIRD Project has given new hope and perspective for the village.
- Traditionally: global benefit, local cost – Better for environment and for rural development: global cost and local benefits

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*Local influence in ecosystem services makes good results and commitments
Catchment pond
Photo: Sakari Paakkinen*

Market Analysis for Eco Tourism

Klara Börjesson

One condition for the good society is that its inhabitants feel proud of their district and are willing to share their love and knowledge of the society that they themselves live in and that there is *hostmanship*. Developing hostmanship creates attraction. Attraction favours both residents and visitors. A visitor who feels at home may become a new inhabitant in the long term.

Hospitality

How do we look after our guests. The service we can offer and the reception they receive are naturally vital for how long they stay and whether they return. This important quality work, which encompasses everything from the delicate flowers on the coffee table to accommodation meeting the highest demands for comfort, can be summarised under the heading Hostmanship.

A satisfied visitor stays longer, will enjoy coming back and will recommend the location to friends and acquaintances. A well-informed visitor buys and experiences more. This is the basis for the work.

Quality

Quality work also covers the standard we have at the destination as a whole. We mentioned previously the aspect of accessibility but will also take up the quality requirements that other markets make on such things as accommodation. Visitors from the UK, for instance, may not accept a shared toilet and shower and there are a number of other requirements we need to take seriously in order to compete on an international market.

Market analysis

We must know more about our markets. We need to become more skilled at identifying the preferences of different customer groups. Among other things, we need to carry out more market research and analyses in order to ensure our presumptive and current visitors get the service and the travel content they require.

We are focusing here on quality tourism, not volumes. By quality tourism, we mean smaller groups that are prepared to pay for a quality experience that includes travel, accommodation, food, guide services and any peripheral activities.

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Restaurants and cafés are important components in rural tourism
Photo: Lisa Nestorson

Wetland Information Centre

Lennart Olsson

An introductory needs analysis relating to a Wetland Information Centre (WIC) has been undertaken in connection with the planning of the BIRD Project. In addition to this, a deeper analysis of the requirements in a national and international perspective has been carried out within the project.

The analysis indicates that the issues of establishment, care and management of wetlands in the agrarian landscape, connected with biodiversity and species preservation, are at present not enough provided for in counselling and research, both in Sweden and in the Baltic Sea region. The existing knowledge is divided between different agents, and the need today is for a concerted approach to information.

Therefore an information centre concerning wetlands, their importance, management, establishment and restoration will be established at Hornborgasjön (Lake Hornborga). The centre will be a focal point for various agents with an interest in wetlands, and will engage in knowledge transmission, knowledge production and experience interchange.

At the centre, work will proceed thematically, focusing on a limited number of topical issues at a time. The main objectives are:

- Facilitate and coordinate information interchange and knowledge transmission between different agencies.
- Build networks and establish forms of interaction between wetland managers.
- Develop a portal and website about wetlands and their management.
- Initiate training programmes, seminars and conferences for various target groups.
- Offer and communicate practical advice of interest to wetland managers.
- Organise demonstrations of wetland management.
- Establish links between research and practical wetland management.

The establishment of a wetland portal and a virtual knowledge centre offering concrete advice on wetland management and restoration will be a central task.

www.eurowetlands.org



Fågeludden at lake Hornborga, Sweden, is the suggested location for a new Wetland Information Centre
Photo: Jan Lundegrén

Best Practice – Guidelines when Building in Nature for Visitors

Mats Rosengren

Nature is becoming an increasingly important part of people's leisure time. Experiencing Nature has positive health effects, and everyone should have the opportunity of getting out into the countryside. Demands for good accessibility to nature reserves are increasing, good accessibility for all, not least disabled people and children.

Bird watching towers, shelters, hiking paths, information signs and car parks are examples of facilities that are often constructed.

Using best practice is a method for building better and more considerately. It should be implemented the construction process systematically, from concept to the maintenance of the finished facility.

The objective is to build in such a way that it is suitable for the target group, is cost effective, and has a long service life. As a guideline, there is a checklist to follow so that no important work stages are forgotten. There are many important aspects to consider – target group, finance, safety, design, accessibility, inspection and maintenance. In terms of accessibility, even the weakest link in the chain must be strong!

Once we succeed, we will have created an excellent basis for positive visits, which will make visitors come back, to the benefit of the countryside.

www.eurowetlands.org



*Accessibility, comfort, security and function – a lot of aspects must be regarded when building in nature for visitors
Photo: Mats Rosengren*

Virtual Tourism Office

Hans Gundmar

Internet as a marketing and sales channel

The aim of the Virtual Tourist Office – VTO – is to offer an informative, promotional and virtual living destination portal, which in the long term will provide us with a completely new type of tourist office, working virtually via the Internet.

Dimitris Buhalis, a leading English researcher within the field of IT says that in the future we will make two journeys each time we choose to travel. We will make a virtual one and a real one. This opens up the possibility of using the Internet as the obvious marketing and sales channel. Using the Internet, the smallest places can reach out to the world, and packaged in the right way can become an attractive visitor destination. The entire travel market is already transparent, i.e. visitors can compare prices, chat with each other about travel destinations, decide and book.

The BIRD-VTO of today

The intention of the BIRD-VTO was to create a common public platform for the EU project partners. For participating partners, this means they receive both a shared and individual information and marketing channel on the Internet in the form of a flexible web portal.

There is current information on the web por-

tal regarding the project, participating countries and regions/partners. Information must be combined with tourist offers and booking links. You should view the web portal as a marketing channel – a shop window for the fantastic resources available within each country and region. Not all the information about bookable services and products will appear on the web portal, as some information and booking features will instead be available on each partner's portal.

Requirements for the future

The VTO has been designed so that they will be simple to administer for each partner. If each partner or the person with responsibility within each region performs regular updates, no general organisation is required for continued operation of the VTO. However, there must be a partner who can provide users with support in the event of any faults and questions. In addition, a partner is required to take responsibility for the technical operation and a marketing plan. Financing of the VTO from outside the project must be secured and a marketing plan should be proposed to the involved partners.

www.eurowetlands.org



VTO, a 24 h open web-info for potential visitors

The Complete BIRD Project Activity Catalogue

Johan Jannert

During the three-year BIRD Project, a large number of activities have been implemented. Conferences, workshops and meetings have been carried out, reports and education packages have been written and small-scale investments have been made.

All these activities are listed in the BIRD Project activity catalogue. The complete catalogue is available at the website. Look for the BIRD Project! Reports, brochures, pictures etc. are most often linked.

www.eurowetlands.org

Easy to find

To make them easy to find, the activities have been divided into following subjects:

<i>Management reports</i>	Reports on planning, monitoring and improvement of management and maintenance of valuable landscapes
<i>Spatial planning reports</i>	Reports on methods and experiences from cross-sectoral planning for rural development in the BIRD Project partner areas with a broad perspective on conditions
<i>Reports on accessibility, information and marketing</i>	Reports on the development of tourism infrastructure, information and marketing activities for eco-tourism and culture tourism
<i>Educational reports</i>	Reports on development of education and training packages for essential target groups
<i>Small scale investments</i>	Description of installations for increased accessibility in valuable nature areas with special focus on disabled
<i>Information products</i>	Booklets, maps, folders, web pages etc for visitors, managers, guides and others
<i>Meetings</i>	Transnational BIRD Project conferences, seminars and workshops, steering committee meetings; national BIRD Project meetings reported in native languages
<i>Study tours</i>	Transnational and national BIRD Project study tours; BIRD Project contributions to external study tours and meetings
<i>Education and training</i>	Courses carried out during the BIRD Project
<i>Partners</i>	The partners' number is referred to in each individual activity.
<i>Others</i>	Activities beyond above mentioned headlines.

Partners in the BIRD Project 2004–2007

Estonia

Haaslava municipality	www.haaslava.ee
Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation	www.ctc.ee
Tartu County Environmental Department	www.tartu.envir.ee
Alatskivi municipality	www.alatskivi.ee
Vara municipality	www.varavald.ee

Finland

Metsähallitus, Savonlinna	www.metsa.fi
Municipality of Parikkala	www.parikkala.fi
Municipality of Saari	Joined Parikkala municipality from January 1, 2005
Municipality of Rantasalmi	www.rantasalmi.fi
Rantasalmi Institute of Environmental Education	www.yki.fi
Regional Council of South Karelia	www.ekarjala.fi

Germany

State Agency for Nature and Environment Schleswig-Holstein	www.umwelt.schleswig-holstein.de/?lanu
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Latvia

Talsi District Council	Left the project in August 2006
Liepāja District Council	Left the project in August 2006

Lithuania

Marijampolė State Forestry Enterprise	
Nature Heritage Fund	
State Service for Protected Areas	
Lithuanian State Department of Tourism	www.tourism.lt
Žuvintas Biosphere Reserve	
Alytus district municipality	www.arsa.lt
Marijampolė municipality	www.marijampole.lt
Lazdijai district municipality	www.lazdijai.lt
Meteliai Regional Park	

Sweden

County Administration Board of Västra Götaland	www.o.lst.se Lead Partner
County Administration Board of Östergötland	www.e.lst.se
Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	www.internat.naturvardsverket.se/
Skövde University College	www.his.se
Municipality of Falköping	www.falkoping.se
Municipality of Mariestad	www.mariestad.se
Municipality of Skara	www.skara.se
Municipality of Skövde	www.skovde.se
Municipality of Töreboda	www.toreboda.se
Municipality of Motala	www.motala.se
Municipality of Mjölby	www.mjolby.se
West Sweden Tourist Board	www.vastsverige.com
East Sweden Tourism Council	www.ostgotaporten.com

