



Kisalföldi homokpuszta

Military activity and nature conservation in the Hungarian Little Plain

LIFE08/NAT/H000289



Dear Nature Lover Friend, Dear Reader,

By funding the Life+ community program in January 2010 the *“Restoration and conservation of priority-listed Pannonic sand land habitats in military owned area of the Hungarian Little Plain”* (LIFE08 NAT/H/000289) project started with the collaboration of four organizations, as part of the Hungarian Defence and Nature Conservation Program.

As stated in our previous newsletter, the project has set out priority tasks such as conservation of the natural values and biodiversity of the calcareous sand steppe including the Györszentiván military exercise area, the restoration of degraded habitats and the strengthening of the population of certain species, as well as optimal coordination of military activities and nature conservation goals.

We would like to inform you on the current activities of the project, the occurrences and events of the previous period as well as our programs within the scope of this newsletter. With regard to the project, our consortium considers it important to develop the widest possible civil partnership. Thank you for keeping track of the project's evolution! Your feedback and comments are still welcome by admin@kisalfoldilife.hu.

The project is funded by the European Union's LIFE + program.

Within the framework of the European Union's LIFE + program, the consortium of Defence Economic Office of Hungarian Ministry of Defence, Budapest Forestry Stock Co., Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate and Aquaprofit Zrt. has won € 1.26 million EU financial support for the nature conservation restoration of the military areas of the calcareous sand steppe in Hungarian Little Plain as well as conservation of habitats and species. In our newsletter we will keep you informed about the latest activities and events of the project, Thank you for keeping track of the project's evolution!





With grazing to improve the condition of sand grassland habitats

The nature conservation works carried out at the Hungarian Little Plain Life + project area aim to preserve and improve the status of Pannonian sandy grasslands that remain in the Natura 2000 area.

In the framework of the restoration works, the grazing of the Hungarian gray cattle started in 2014 with the aim of preserving the natural values in the area. In the framework of the project maintenance tasks, the Budapest Forestry Stock Co. continued the grazing of cattle herd in 2017. In the total area of 212.96 hectares the grazing abilities of the Hungarian pied cattle and sheep were also surveyed. Following the grazing results of 2017, it can be stated that combined grazing under strict nature conservation supervision can be used to achieve effective grassland management even in extreme weather conditions. The nature conservation results of grazing have encouraged the Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate and the Nature Conservation Authority to initiate the increase of 370 ha of the grazing areas.



Collecting seeds of the Pannonian sand grasslands continued in 2017

In 2017 within the Hungarian Little Plain Life+ project area, the collecting of seeds of the following grassland species was carried out manually and was prepared for sowing:



Species affected by manual seed collection	Amount collected
<i>Stipa pennata</i>	2 kg
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	200 kg
<i>Phleum phleoides</i>	110 kg
<i>Festuca rupicola</i>	155 kg

The expert staff of Budapest Forestry Stock Co. carried out the mowing of the 16 hectare grass colony and the baling of the mowed plant material as well as the transporting and deposition into the winter storage site. Threshing of the seeds was done manually from the machine collected plant material and then by a total of 660 kg of seeds were put into the bags.

The main objective remains to reduce the invasive species

One of the main goals of the project is to eliminate the herbaceous and woody invasive plants from the nature reserve project area. The presence of invasive plants is still significant in the private and public pieces of lands surrounding the project area. The fresh seed coming from the surrounding lands or seed in the soil, as expected, requires continuous action to prevent self-seeding and spread.. The Budapest Forestry Stock Co., as the operator of the site, prevents the spread of invasive plants in the restored areas by mechanical (grazing and mowing) or by chemical protection.. In 2017 the weather was very wet during the chemical treatment period, so in the case of acacia, only 177 hectares of land could be treated with gentle treatment (brushing, spraying).

The manual chemical treatment (lubrication) of *Ailanthus altissima*, *Celtis occidentalis*, *Elaeagnus* and *Asclepias syriaca* was carried out on 230.79 ha.

The Győr District Office of Győr-Moson-Sopron County Government Office as a Nature Conservation Authority confirmed the positive results of after-treatment in its inspectional record dated on 7 November 2017. The slow spread of indigenous tree and shrub patches and the regeneration of grasslands are continuous. Interventions, which appeared to be somewhat drastic during the project period, had created the possibility of natural development of sand habitats. Extensive maintenance practices ensure the survival of target habitats.



Monitoring the changes in ecosystem

The Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate continues the investigation of habitats, protected and marking species in the area. The research of the effects and success of post-treatments has been done in four sampling pairs (treated, untreated) for the most important groups (vegetation, beetles, spiders, ants, orthopteras).

A comparative study of the development of restored areas by sowing and spontaneous grassland spreading is continued. The detailed results of the research can be accessed on the website of the Directorate (www.ferto-hansag.hu).

The small mammalian fauna of the area has not been studied previously, so in 2016-2017 detailed faunistic studies were carried out in the project area and its surroundings. The small mammalian fauna of the grasslands are fairly poor in species, but in the shrubs and in the natural forest patches a number of rare species occur. During the one-week live-trapping experiments, 97 specimens of 7 small mammal species were found in the sample areas. Mostly the presence of *Apodemus flavicollis*, and *Crocidura suaveolen* could be identified in the small mammal groups. In the region, like in all the other part of Transdanubia, there can be observed the aggressive spread of *Apodemus agrarius*.

Our success story on the 'Winner Hungarian Life Projects' site

The success story of the Hungarian Little Plain LIFE+ project has been published on the web and facebook site of the successful EU funded projects in Hungary in order to share best practice and indicate new projects. "In the past few years Hungary has done a lot to preserve the natural values of military sites, of which the Hungarian Little Plain project, carried out between 2010 and 2015, is outstanding example", can be read in the summary on the site.

Articles describing success stories can be viewed on the Nyerő Magyarok website.