



**LIFE Nature project** “Marine Protected Areas in the Eastern Baltic Sea”  
Reference number: LIFE 05 NAT/LV/000100

## **Action A1 – Raising capacity of project staff for implementation**

**Action leader B, Baltic Environmental Forum – Latvia**

# **FINAL REPORT**

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**Describe clearly for each of the actions (and sub-actions as appropriate) defined in the proposal: conducted activities and resulting outputs.**

Action A1 was meant to provide training and inspiration for the project team to undertake the inventories (habitats and birds) and also to view marine protected areas as holistic concept (Germany study visit).

For this purpose a **training course on methodology of habitat mapping** was organised at the Finnish partner Metsähallitus: three experts from the relevant Baltic partners carrying out the habitat inventory (P4, P8 and P14) were accompanying the Finnish experts for one week (19-23 September 2005) at habitat mapping activities in Finnish protected areas. The topics of the training were to learn underwater video and scuba diving for the inventories, to discuss the advantages and limitations of the methods and to learn data analysis – interpretation and intercalibration.

The bird inventory team had two trainings: bird counting from ship and aerial counts.

**The training course on bird counting from ships** (21-25 November, in Latvia) was performed by experts from Partner P17, Birdlife International. In total 11 trainees participated in this training.

**The training on aerial survey techniques** (3-5 May 2006, in Estonia) was conducted by a Dutch expert and two Estonian senior experts of P5, and 8 trainees were trained.

At both courses the vehicles were the same than to be used during the inventories: P7 provided a navy ship for the training and P5 rented the Cessna airplane. The trainees learned counting methods and data interpretation. Furthermore the trainings were also used to harmonise the methods among the three countries for the inventories. Besides Baltic partners, also experts from the Russian partner P16 were participating in the bird survey training courses.

Another training element of the project was a **study visit to Germany** to the Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) at its location on the island *Vilm* at the shore of the Baltic Sea (13-17 March 2006). The department of the BfN is in charge of site designation in the EEZ of Germany. The host provided in-house experts from its department (legal expert, fish species expert, habitat mapping expert and monitoring experts) as well as external experts being involved in the German sites designation (bird experts, habitat classification experts as well as experts on voluntary management schemes from the WWF). The study visit lasted for five days and contained an intensive seminar and two excursions, one on the island, which is a protected area, and one to the *Jasmund National Park*, which has a marine area and a very modern visitor centre, meant to give a good example to the project partners. 17 participants from nearly all Baltic and Russian partner organizations participated in the study visit, which provided very good input and ideas; it helped solving some habitat interpretation questions and build up good partnership with the German project partner.

One more study visit was organised although having been deleted from the LIFE project and budget, but as it was strongly linked to the LIFE project it shall be described here as “accompanying activity”: a **visit to the Netherlands** was organised in May 2006 for one week and several seminars and excursions to Marine and coastal sides were organised; 30 participants from the Baltic LIFE partners (Russian partner was not found eligible) and Baltic States’ competent authorities were participating in the study visit. It was hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture and Nature Conservation and financed by the Ministry of Economy, which unfortunately during LIFE project application did not agree to become a co-financer to the LIFE project, but wanted to have a single action. Nevertheless the study visit has happened and provided great input for the Baltic experts and the LIFE project.

The **study visit of project partners to Russian marine territories** and Russian partners was organized in May 2008. The aim of the study visit was to exchange experience on marine biodiversity values, their protection and solving/avoiding conflicts with economic interests, to visit (potential) marine protected areas in the Eastern Gulf of Finland, to have a joint meeting with Russian experts and to discuss possibilities for further co-operation.

Due to the fact that several marine territories could not be visited because of the restriction from the Federal Secret Service (FSB) a smaller group of Baltic experts than originally planned has been travelling to Russia. Nevertheless, the travel was very fruitful and has led to new ideas of cooperation. A key finding of the visit and its preparation is, however, the issue of security as anticipated by the state authorities and the non-accessibility of marine areas for experts, no matter if national or international. Another key finding is that the Eastern parts of the Gulf of Finland are important for the eco system and biodiversity protection must be intensified, also including international cooperation.

All activities were implemented according to the planned schedule and fulfilled the set goals.

**In addition to the points mentioned above please indicate when appropriate reactions/feed-back were received.**

The training, both for habitat as well as for bird inventories, was attested by the participants as excellent quality and high importance for the project. The feedback from participants of both study trips (to Germany and Netherlands) was also very positive: they evaluated the trips as successful and useful.

**List of deliverables (available information, handbooks, videos, publications, handouts, leaflets etc.)**

- Report from training on aerial survey techniques;
- Report from training course on methodology of habitat mapping;
- Report from meeting/training: Methodological meeting and practical training course on bird counting from ships;
- Report from: Study Visit to Germany: Site selection for marine Natura 2000 areas: fulfilling the requirements of the birds directive and the habitats directive (Baltic Sea, EEZ and territorial sea);
- Report from study visit "Coastal protected areas in the Eastern part of the Gulf of Finland", Russia;
- Report on "Russian partner capacity building".

**Indicate major problems/drawbacks encountered**

All activities were implemented according to the planned schedule and fulfilled the set goals, so no major problems or drawbacks were encountered.