



Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team

To the

Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania

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Committee on the Environmental Protection in the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania

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Aquatic Warbler conservation in Lithuania – implementation of the running EU LIFE Project “Magni Ducatus Acrola”

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

after having visited Belarus and Lithuania in May and June of this year and after having consulted representatives of the Lithuanian Ministry of Environment I would like to express my concern about intentions of the Ministry to stop the successfully running Aquatic Warbler Conservation Project “LIFE Magni Ducatus Acrola”. I heard about a critical evaluation by the Ministry regarding some project actions, and that the Ministry doubts the need to finance such a conservation project for the Aquatic Warbler and its habitat.

I want to stress that the implementation of the project is well in line with the internationally agreed Species Action Plan under the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Aquatic Warbler, an agreement under the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species, which was also signed by the Republic of Lithuania. I also remind that in 2015 the last meeting of signatory parties of the Memorandum of Understanding was held in Ventė in Lithuania, and the representatives from the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania were attending the meeting. In Ventė, the recommendation to implement Aquatic Warbler translocation in the Zuvintas Biosphere Reserve as a first pilot project was concluded.

The experts of the International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team are well familiar with the project implementation. We have been advising and steering its implementation from the very beginning. I am convinced that the actions of the project are necessary and well planned, and I am pleased with the progress and successful implementation so far.

Experiences of the project, especially the results of the first Aquatic Warbler translocation, are of highest importance to ensure the survival of the species and the further implementation of our international conservation strategy. Following the experience of Lithuania, we are planning follow-up actions and replication of the Aquatic Warbler translocation NE-Germany, NW-Poland and probably also in the Hortobágy National Park in Hungary.

The Aquatic Warbler conservation project in Lithuania is also based on the experiences of other projects in other countries that are dealing with Aquatic Warbler conservation, and follows good practice activities and techniques. For example, it applies the concept of business and biodiversity, which is now receiving more and more attention in nature conservation. The project-built biomass processing facility in Dreverna fills a gap in the full cycle of long-term conservation and establishes pre-conditions for habitat maintenance also after the end of the project. It also ensures the use of late cut biomass, which is normally a big problem in Aquatic Warbler habitats, when the mowing is postponed till mid of August and the late-mown hay cut is no longer suitable as fodder.

It is important that we aim at the conservation of the entire fen mire ecosystem with its very rich and threatened biodiversity, having the Aquatic Warbler as an ideal flagship species. So, the LIFE Project protects not only one species but the whole bunch of bird, plant, insect and other species. In such a way, the project is also a very important contribution to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. The conservation of fen mires is also a very important action contributing to the EU strategy for climate change mitigation, as one hectare of drained fen mire causes in average 30 t CO₂ emissions annually. Greenhouse gas emissions drop down or stop completely after successful rewetting of fen mires.

I would be very glad if you would keep me informed about further decisions in the context of the ongoing LIFE project. I would like to encourage you to stay in active dialogue with the Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania, who runs the project. I am sure that it is possible to develop good solutions for the benefit of Lithuania's and Europe's nature.

Best wishes and kind regards



Dr Martin Flade
chairman