



LIFE10NAT/DE/007

FINAL Report

**Covering the project activities from 01.09.2011 to
30.06.2017**

Reporting Date
30.12.2017

**Dry habitats characterised by limestone
in the cultural landscape
of the Höxter district**

KTKK HX
„Vielfalt auf Kalk“

Project Data

Project location	District of Höxter – North Rhine-Westphalia - Germany
Project start date:	01.09.2011
Project end date:	30.08.2016 Extension date: 30.06.2017
Total Project duration (in months)	70 months (including Extension of 10 months)
Total budget	1.099.795 €
Total eligible budget	1.126.738 €
EU contribution:	580.361 €
(%) of total costs	52,77 %
(%) of eligible costs	51,53 %

Beneficiary Data

Name Beneficiary	Kreis Höxter
Contact person	Mrs. Diana Giefers
Postal address	Moltkestr. 12, 37671 Höxter
Visit address	Moltkestr. 12, 37671 Höxter
Telephone	0049-5271-9654220
Fax:	0049-5271-9654498
E-mail	d.giefers@kreis-hoexter.de
Project Website	www.vielfalt-auf-kalk.de

Summary

The primary objective of this LIFE+ project was to maintain and establish a good conservation status of the habitat types semi-natural semi-dry calcareous grassland (6210 (*)), *Juniperus communis* formations on calcareous grasslands (5130), lowland hay meadows (6510), rupicolous calcareous pioneer grasslands (6110*), calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation (8210), Medio-European calcareous scree of hill and montane levels (8160*) and Medio-European limestone beech forests of the *Cephalanthero-Fagion* (9150) in eleven FFH-areas within the district of Höxter, North Rhine-Westphalia. Alongside the enlargement and optimisation of the existing stands of the habitat types named above, the framework conditions for a sustainable use and coherence between the habitats in these protected areas were improved. Specific measures were undertaken for quality determining animal and plant species of the annex II and IV of the FFH Directive. This involved the species smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), large blue (*Maculinea arion*), stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) and the lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*). Given the sharp decline of the lady's slipper, this species was propagated ex-situ in order to recolonise lost former sites or enhance existing weak populations. Further beneficiaries of the applied measures are the red-backed shrike (*Lanius collurio*) and grey-headed woodpecker (*Picus canus*) as species of the annex I of the Birds Directive. In order to regenerate severely overaged juniper populations, incapable of self-rejuvenation, plant cuttings were planted in these project areas.

In the short and medium term the open area habitats, which were cleared of shrubs and woody vegetation, will turn into semi-dry calcareous grassland, increasing the area of this habitat type by 24 ha. The same applies to the lowland hay meadows (6510), whose area increased by almost 31 ha. Due to the optimisation of the 6210, 5130, 6110*, 8210, 8160* and 9150 habitat types and their goal-oriented use and maintenance in the future, an optimal conservation status will be achieved and guaranteed for these types. The coherence of the semi-dry calcareous grasslands and *Juniperus communis* formations was obtained or greatly improved with the clearance of shrubs and strong thinning of woodland stands. In the medium to long run an increase in numbers of individuals is forecasted for the target species.

The constructive cooperation of the actors / stakeholders involved was highly positive over the entire length of the project. Not only did the landowners make their respective areas readily available for the implementation of the measures but they also forwent their revenue from wood obtained throughout these actions. This led to cheaper costs of the measures for this project, which in turn allowed for an implementation of the actions on a larger scale (110 ha) than originally planned (91 ha).

The interest of the general public was very high for this project, which could be felt by the good turnout at the offered events. School events, study projects with the university OWL, networking events with other LIFE projects, bachelor's and master's theses and a conference ensured the transmission of scientific findings.

Project management

The project was carried out from the 01.09.2011 – 30.06.2017 by the sponsor district of Höxter in collaboration with the project partner group "Landschaftsstation im Kreis Höxter e.V.". Especially due to delays caused by the weather the project had to be extended by 10 months from the 01.09.2016 to the 30.06.2017.

Being the sponsor, the district of Höxter was responsible for the overall management and administration of the project. A 0.4-full-time-equivalent job was made available for this. As an involved beneficiary the "Landschaftsstation" was responsible for the nature conservation related professional supervision of the project, the planning of measures and the construction monitoring. 0.6- and 0.2-full-time-equivalent jobs were available for the "Landschaftsstation" for the implementation of the tasks mentioned above and proportional administrative tasks respectively. Further, the landscape maintenance team of the "Landschaftsstation" was involved in the implementation of the measures.

Technical Part

The project measures can be understood as an optimisation and enhancement of open area and woodland habitats. Thus, in the open areas semi-dry grasslands were cleared of shrubs, spruce stands were cleared completely on former semi-dry grasslands, problematic species such as wood small-reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*) were contained and exterminated, and fences were built to enhance the utilisation possibilities of these areas. For the development and optimisation of the lowland hay meadows, species enrichment was carried out by hay-flower seeding. The regeneration of overaged juniper populations and the establishment of new populations were achieved with cuttings, which were horticulturally raised and, once established, planted to the respective areas.

The measures carried out within the woodland served primarily for the creation of sparse forest stands, in order to promote lady's slipper populations and enhance the coherence of the open area habitats. Furthermore, stands of the *Cephalanthero-Fagion* beech forests (9150) were enhanced by transforming stands non-adapted to the site conditions to more site-adapted forests. Special emphasis was put onto the promotion of more shade-intolerant tree species. The thinning out within these shaded forest stands also greatly improved the light conditions for the 6110*, 8160* and 8210 habitat types, contained within these forest structures. Coppice with standards, a historic woodland management form, was reintroduced and adopted on a small scale. Through the creation of

structurally diverse shelterbelts and species-rich fringes, the habitat conditions were greatly improved for inhabitants of these ecotones. As special species protection measures for reptiles, essential special structures were regenerated or newly created. The lady's slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*) was propagated ex-situ in order to enhance sparse stands in numbers and to re-populate lost former sites. Moreover this was achieved by a targeted sowing of seeds on prior optimised sites. In order to ensure the goal-oriented maintenance and use of the open area habitats within the first years of the creation and optimisation, a mower unit for steep slopes with different attachment tools has been acquired and used successfully up to this day.

Public Relations and Knowledge Transfer

The citizens of the region as well as their political representatives and the land users (farmers, shepherds, hunters and foresters) were the addressees. Another important target group were the multipliers of service clubs such as the rotarians or lions, the nature conservation clubs and associations as well as the culture and history associations with their large membership base within the region. In order to guarantee sustainability of the applied measures, schools and universities were involved in the public relations transferring the knowledge towards education, science and research. This was achieved through the use of printable media (flyer, newspaper articles, publications and information boards), a homepage, lectures and talks, exhibitions, excursions, project weeks with students, guided hikes and tours as well as a conference.

Evaluation of the Results

The set goals were reached to the full extent for the implementation of the measures. For most of these the degree of implementation greatly exceeded these goals when taking into account the external actions by third parties. Considerable strong synergies could be mobilised. In places, where measures could not be realised to the full extent it was not relevant for the nature conservation goals since these targets were met through the implementation of other measures.

Long-term Effects

With the enlargement, consolidation and boundary reorganisation of the semi-dry calcareous grasslands and the involvement of the lowland hay meadows into the utilisation system, the framework conditions for a goal-oriented and sustainable use of these areas were created. These conditions were also achieved for the use of the forest areas through the creation of sparse forest stands and utilisation conversion to a promotion of shade-intolerant light-loving tree species. The in the future ongoing necessary maintenance and development measures will be undertaken by the "Landschaftsstation" in the district of Höxter for which the

state of North Rhine-Westphalia and the district of Höxter will act as financing sponsors.

Financial Report

The calculated costs in the amount of 1,099,795 € were minimally exceeded to a total amount of 1,126,738 €. This was primarily due to higher personnel costs and other costs not anticipated in the application as well as due to expenses for items of equipment needed throughout the project. In consideration of the project results, these additional costs are wholeheartedly justified.