



Agri-environmental scheme for the Red-breasted Goose in Bulgaria

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nature
a home



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Red-breasted Goose has a large flyway range, but few sites along the flyway play key role

Coastal Dobrudzha in Bulgaria is one of the key areas in the winter period, where up to 90% of the global population may concentrate

Key areas are included in the Natura 2000 network as SPAs, but they cover small feeding areas

Since 15-20 years farmers complain about crop yield damage from grazing geese

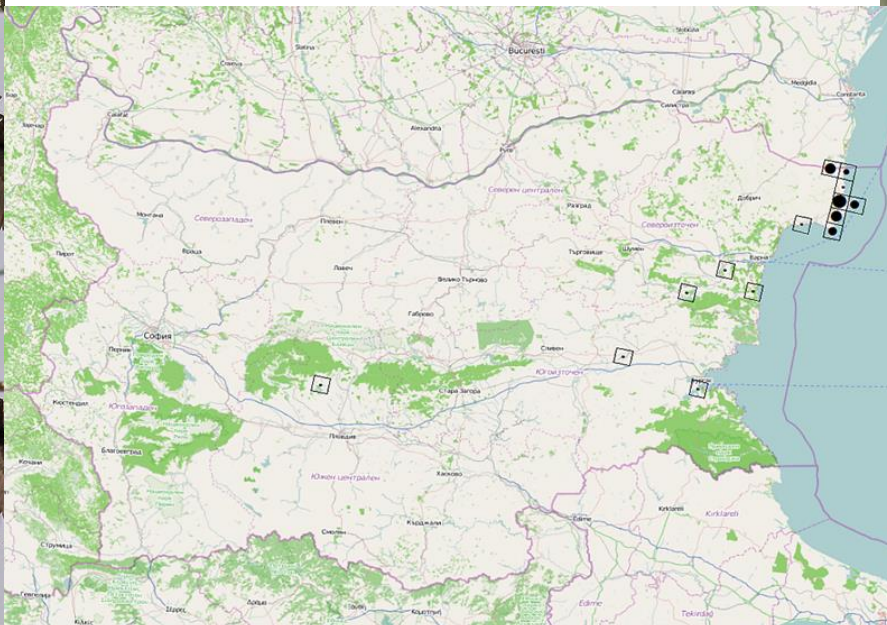
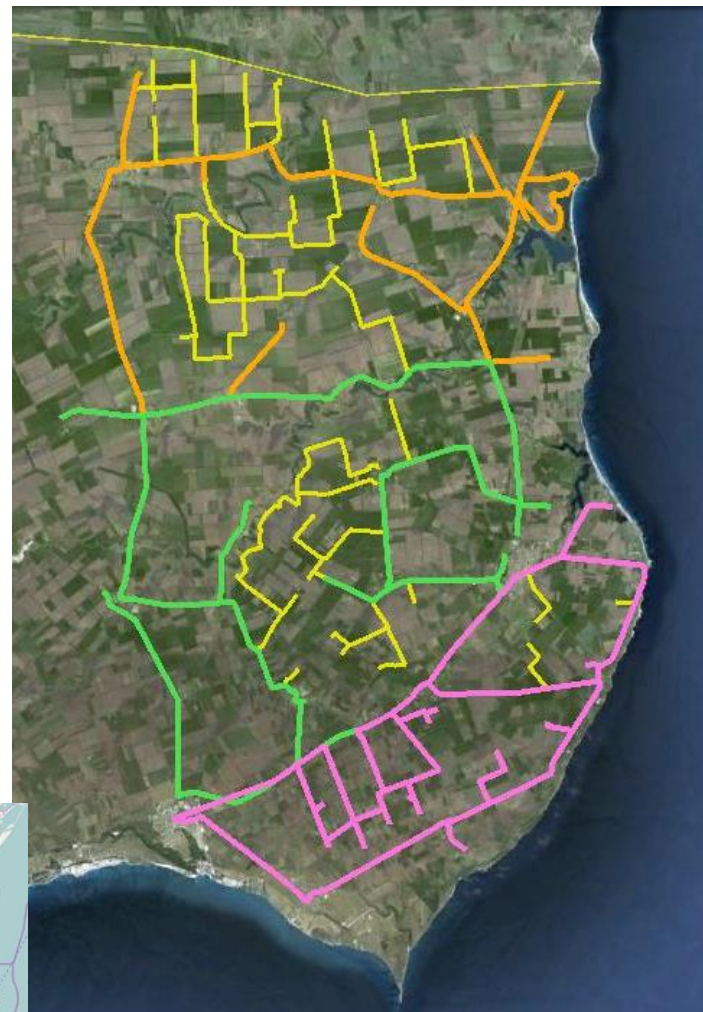
In 2010 started a LIFE project focused on the area and the species – crop damage study and foraging habitat conservation was one of the actions planned





We used a systematic sampling approach to provide an unbiased assessment of the distribution of geese among available habitat.

**GIS-relational database developed
Data modeled to identify preferred feeding habitats of geese, to help frame management recommendations for goose-friendly agriculture**





The LIFE Project team set up a field experiments to study the crop impact of grazing geese and the area favoured by the species so to ensure appropriate coverage of potential AES.

Experimental plots with enclosures were set up in arable fields around the lakes for 2 years to study impact of grazing on the wheat crop yields.

The field experiment is considered one of the most robust made to date in Europe and one of the few in E and SE Europe.



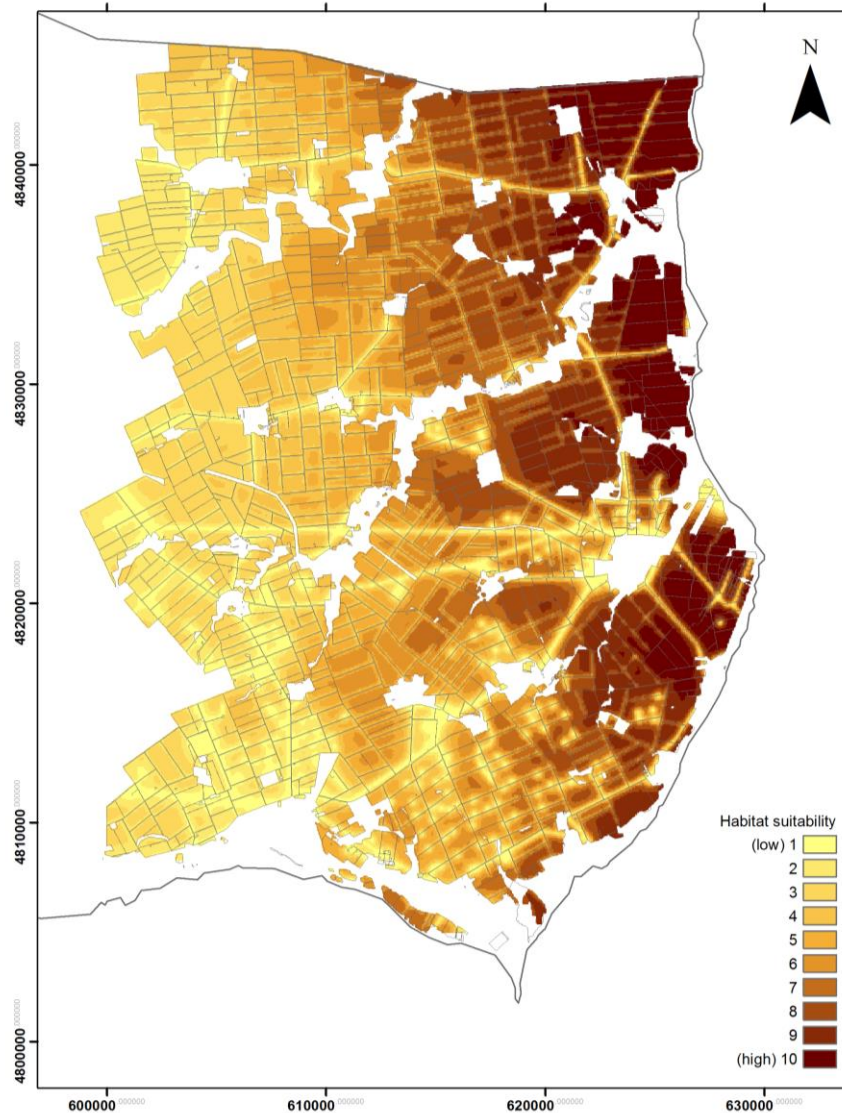


Involvement of the local farmers and potential beneficiaries

- In partnership with local farmers agricultural practices were tested to inform the development of new agri-environmental payment.
- National agri-environmental measure for wintering geese on national level developed by BSPB and Life project team contributed to its adoption based on existing information in 2012
- In summer 2013 a Pilot scheme initiated to test RbG favorable practices to be included in a new RbG agri-environmental scheme. Total of 11 farmers participating the scheme covers 2 years.
- Agri-environmental measures presented to farmers on two general meetings, individual meetings held with farmers to promote agri-environmental scheme
- Leaflets on alternatives of rodenticides, good farming practices and agri-environmental payments produced for local farmers.



In 2015 a new AES as part of the NRDP in Bulgaria



In 2014 was proposed new regional AES for Red-breasted Goose foraging habitat in Coastal Dobrudzha 103 euro/ha

- Development of the AES based on demand and empirical evidence from scientific study of the incurred crop damage
- Proposed structure and eligibility criteria based on pilot testing with local farmers and scientific evidence
- Eligible land based on scientific GIS habitat model of foraging grounds
- Started in 2015 with 65 applicants from within the target region and altogether 240 applicants on both “geese” measures in Dbrudzha



Development following the end of the LIFE Project

Main problems are linked to insufficient amount of funds for the agri-environmental payments

- First proposals to reduce the payment administratively to 13 euro/ha in 2015, but finally not adopted.
- The application for this regional sub-measure was closed from 2016 onwards and only applicants from 2015 are being paid.
- In 2016 and 2017 there were administrative pressure on participating farmers to reduce surface of their land included in the AES to reduce the amount of payment

What made the actions on development and adoption successful?!

- The interest for the measure amongst local farmers shows its relevance and applicability.
- There was demand for such AES amongst local farmers incurring yield losses
- The AES was based on robust and meticulous research work and extensive experiments
- Development of the measure was in done in close collaboration with farmers and was initially tested with a Pilot AES.

The AES along with the sub measure for “wintering geese” that covers other goose concentration regions ensures the protection of the habitat for Annex II species and other waterbirds concentrating in winter period and dependent on the arable fields for foraging. It is based on needs, demand and scientific evidence. The most inclusive development of AES in Bulgaria to date.

Future step should look into combining the two measures – the “Red-breasted Goose” and “wintering geese” into one national AES to optimize administration and ensure sustaining the AES



A large flock of Canada geese is gathered in a field with patches of snow and green grass. The geese have dark brown wings and backs, white underparts, and a distinctive white stripe running from the base of the beak, through the eye, and down the neck. Their heads are turned in various directions, some looking towards the camera. The background is filled with more geese, creating a sense of a large colony.

Thank you for your attention!