



Experimental management of EU protected forest habitats in Latvia

Sandra Ikauniece, Nature Conservation Agency, project NAT-PROGRAMME

Guntis Brūmelis, University of Latvia, Faculty of Biology

- New Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011-2020, which includes the [Aichi Biodiversity Target of restoring 15% of degraded ecosystems](#) and protection for 17% of the land territory.
- Where is this taken seriously by the forest manager community?

Latvia

- 50% forest cover
- doubled forest cover since 1920
- hemi-boreal forest zone

Biotops	Range	Area covered by habitat type within range	Specific structures and functions	Future prospects	Overall assessment of conservation status
9010*	FV	U2x	U2–	U2–	U2–
9020*	FV	U2–	U2–	U2–	U2–
9060	FV	FV	U2–	U2–	U2–
9080*	FV	U2–	U2–	U2–	U2–
9160	FV	U2–	U2–	U2–	U2–
9180*	FV	XX	U2x	XX	U2X
91D0*	FV	U2x	U2–	U2–	U2–
91E0*	FV	U2–	U2–	U2–	U2–
91F0	XXX	U2x	U2–	XX	444

Status unfavourable

Main restoration activities conducted

- “Hands off”
- Selective cutting
- Recommended management in WKH (old recommendations that need to be improved), include, for example, cutting and removal of understory spruce in pine stands

Project “Management of Woodland Key Habitats in Latvia” (2003-2005), partners State Forest Service and SC Latvijas State Forests (Latvia), Regional Forestry Board of Östra Götaland (Sweden)

- Developed and tested methods of management in WKH
- Planned activities in 44 locations, 17 managed (incl. 1 ha prescribed burning)
- Funding – national, organization budgets
- However, no monitoring

LIFE programme

- Important funding source since 2002.gada
- 26 projects since 2002, of which 6 had activities on forest habitat restoration

Cross-border programmes (ERAF)

Estonia-Latvia cros-border programme

Projekts “Green Corridor” (2011.-2013.)

Capercaillie lek restoration (also 91D0*) – 57 ha (101 30 EUR or ~ 200 EUR/h

SC Latvijas Valsts meži (Latvija state forests)

- Stock company funds
- Implementation of Nature protection plans in N2000
 - Cutting around large oak
 - Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the Carpinion betuli (9160) habitat tending
 - Coniferous forests on, or connected to, glaciofluvial eskers (9060)
- WKH and other habitats management regard with recommendations (Western taiga (9010*) – removal of spruce understorey, more in 2007-2008) – capercaillie leks

NR Tebras' oaks

Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the Carpinion betuli (9160)

- Nature management plan lists natural succession of oak to spruce as a negative factor:
 - Spruce changes soil conditions and the understorey community
 - Decrease establishment possibilities for oak and other broadleaved tree
 - Decreased growth of oak due to competition
- Selective spruce cutting around oak

NR Tebras' oaks (2009.) after spruce removal



NR Tebras' oaks (2011.)



Capercaillie leks

- absolute main focus of restoration for conservation of biological diversity in terms of area
- flagship species
- umbrella species
- Drainage in past – causes developement of dense spruce understorey
- Need shrub removal – usually indicated in plans

Capercaillie leks



before spruce removal



after spruce removal



2012.g. october – ditches filling using excavator; **6284 m**
(8762 EUR)



LIFE+ programme project 2012.-2017

National Conservation and Management Programme for Natura 2000 Sites in Latvia

- Develop guidelines for management and conservation of EU protected habitats in NATURA territories.
- Pilot experimental management trials

Guidelines, for example

- ensure at least 20 m³/ha coarse woody debris with diameter > 25 cm

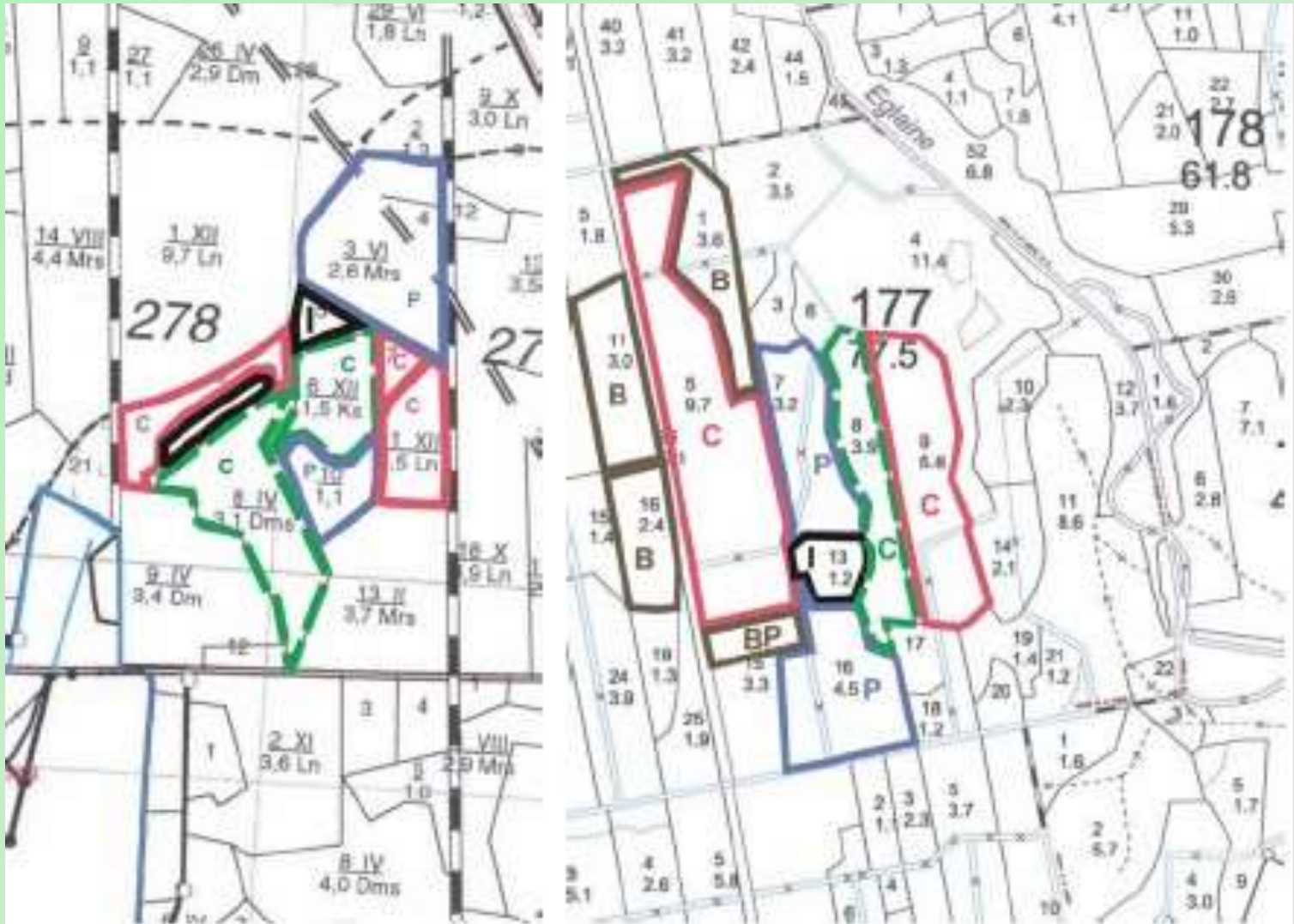


Gauja National Park
2014., LIFE+ project
**Forest Habitat
Restoration within the
Gauja National Park**



LIFE+ project “Birds in Adaži” activity
“Restoration of boreal forest”

Guidelines – develop habitat aggregations



9160 Sub-Atlantic and medio-European oak or oak-hornbeam forests of the Carpinion betuli

BACI experiment – cut spruce in a 25 m radius around oak trees with the aim to improve light conditions and promote establishment of oak





after 1 year



after 2 years

Results:

- development of a dense herb layer with high ruderal species cover
- no or minimal establishment of oak (perhaps due to large boar population)

9060 Coniferous forests on, or connected to, glaciofluvial eskers



Aim:

- create conditions for sun-loving species (for example, *Pulsatilla patens*, *Dracocephalum ruyschiana*, *Onobrychia arenaria*)
- development of a pine cohort



Results after 3 years:

- no sun-loving species
- pine cohort established

Problems

- No defined state policy on ensuring habitat favourable status, no targets or goals
- Focus on NATURA territories
- Projects focus on specific territories, species, no landscape perspective or planning
- Low capacity of responsible institution (Nature Protection Board), habitat management is not defined as one of its functions
- Too much focus on freeing old trees from shrubs to favour sun-loving beetles
- Low involvement of the community,
- Poor knowledge - FIRE

Perspectives

- New guidelines will focus new projects on priority habitat restoration needs and methods
- Step made towards developing quantitative conservation targets

Pollarding in Latvia:

Only aim is to create nice trees along boulevards and in parks



Rīga

Rural – pollarding forgotten



Treed boulevards:

- aesthetic value
- when old – cultural value
- important habitat for beetles
- people become emotional when a town decides on cutting for road expansion or other reasons
- poorly surveyed as a habitat for species
- ecological trap? Spatial and temporal continuity?

Survey of treed boulevards in Latvia – will provide important information on biological



Beaver activity in Rīga and in a strictly protected Nature Reserve

Thank you!



guntis.brumelis@lu.lv
sandra.ikauniece@daba.gov.lv