

## The LIFE Project:

OTOP has gathered a partnership of seven NGOs and National Parks from three countries to implement a concise five year project (until 2010) addressing the key conservation needs of the Aquatic Warbler at nine key sites in Poland and Germany. The largest part of the funding is contributed by the EU LIFE Nature Fund.

### The LIFE Project aims to:

- prevent the extinction of the remnant Pomeranian Population
- to improve and increase suitable habitat in the EU stronghold of the species, the Biebrza Valley

Thereby, the project is targeting about 75% of all Aquatic Warblers breeding in the European Union.

To find out more about project, visit:

[www.wodniczka.pl](http://www.wodniczka.pl) or [www.seggenrohrsanger.eu](http://www.seggenrohrsanger.eu)



Karsiborska Kępa observation tower



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### Partners:



The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, BirdLife Partner in the UK)



Western Pomeranian Nature Society (ZTP)



Förderverein Naturschutz im Peenetal e.v. (FVP)



North-Podlasiian Society for the Protection of Birds (PTOP)



Biebrza National Park (BPN)

### Main Sponsor:



The EU LIFE Nature Fund



### Additional Sponsors:



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# Karsiborska Kępa

Project site of the EU LIFE Nature project

Conserving Aquatic Warblers  
in Poland and Germany



Photo: Paweł Jabłoński



## Karsiborska Kępa LIFE project site

The project site consists of three islands located in the delta of the River Swina. The largest island is Karsiborska Kępa with 300 ha. The little islands Ostrowek and Wola Kępa are only 20 ha each. The whole project site forms part of the Special Protection Area "Delta Swina", and as such is included in the European Union's Natura 2000 network.

The Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP) has been managing most of this area since 1993, protecting the breeding habitats of many rare birds.

"Natura 2000 - Europe's wildlife for you." This place is a part of Europe's Natura 2000 network, which means, that this area is inhabited by the most endangered species of plants and animals in Europe. 27 EU countries created a joint network of Natura 2000, to protect the most valuable items of the continent's wildlife heritage."

photo: G.T. Kłosowscy



Aquatic Warbler



Habitat occupied by Aquatic Warblers on Karsiborska Kępa

## Habitat characteristics of the project site

Karsiborska Kępa is influenced by the brackish waters of the Baltic Sea and has been used for grazing for over 100 years. This has led to the creation of pastures with salt-tolerant plant communities, which are rare habitat types in Poland. The edge of the island and areas that are not grazed are covered by reed beds. The main island is surrounded by a dike that protects it from flooding by the Baltic Sea. Mineral soils covered by salt-tolerant (halophytic) pastures dominate on the land within the dike. Where the soil is more organic or peaty, former pastures are increasingly being replaced by reed beds.

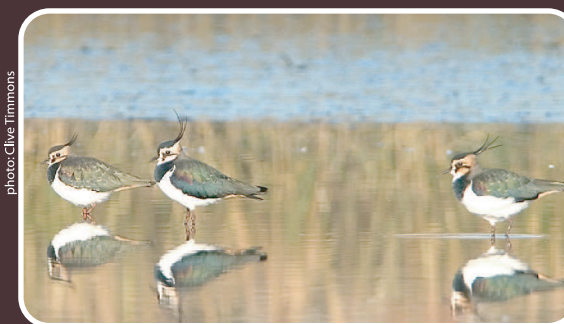
The relief of the island is flat, but provides for numerous small and medium-sized seasonal ponds and puddles.

Karsiborska Kępa has a well-developed network of drainage ditches, which OTOP uses to adjust water levels so that they are ideal for birds. Within the site, the Aquatic Warbler can be found occupying sparse or annually mown reedbeds with a rich undergrowth of sedges and other peatland plants. The grazed meadows are important for numerous breeding and migrating waders, ducks and geese.

## Why did we choose Karsiborska Kępa?

Karsiborska Kępa is the second largest breeding site for the Pomeranian population of Aquatic Warbler. Monitoring at Karsiborska Kępa, conducted as part of the LIFE project, confirmed the presence of over 20 singing males in 2006. While this constitutes 0.5% of the European Union's Aquatic Warbler population, its main significance is that this figure is equal to 25% of the genetically distinct and rapidly declining Pomeranian population, therefore making the conservation of the species at this site a high priority for the preservation of the genetical diversity of the Aquatic Warbler.

Karsiborska Kępa has significant potential for the restoration of Aquatic Warbler breeding sites and in the future could become the core of the Pomeranian population, from which this species will spread to other Pomeranian breeding sites.



Lapwings

photo: Clive Timmons

## Conservation measures at the project site

Within the Aquatic Warbler LIFE Project, we are actively improving the habitat for the Aquatic Warbler by:

- grazing extensively and in fenced areas to create vegetation suitable for Aquatic Warblers
- summer and winter mowing of overgrown reedbeds around the Aquatic Warbler habitat to remove old biomass and weaken the reedbeds
- managing the water level by maintaining the drainage network, building inlets for water from the Swina River, renovating dikes and managing the pumping station

The ongoing monitoring of birds, vegetation, food resources and hydrology, will enable us to optimise our activities for the protection of the Aquatic Warbler.



Mechanical mowing

photo: Dariusz Gonczarow