

## The LIFE Project:

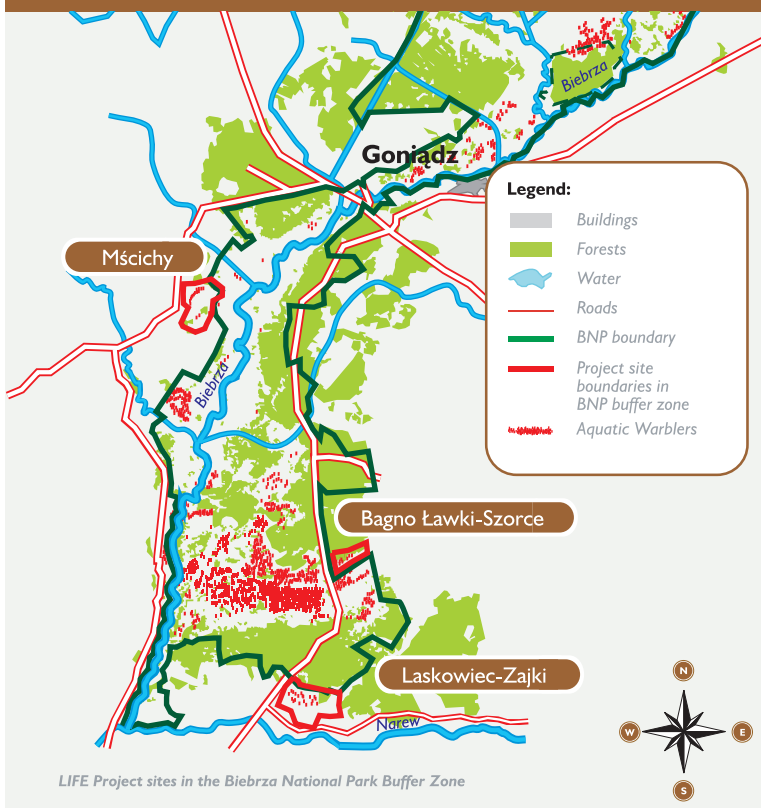
OTOP has gathered a partnership of seven NGOs and National Parks from three countries to implement a concise five year project (until 2010) addressing the key conservation needs of the Aquatic Warbler at nine key sites in Poland and Germany. The largest part of the funding is contributed by the EU LIFE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



Project office:

**OTOP-BirdLife Poland**  
ul. Odrowęża 24,  
05-270 Marki, Poland  
tel. (48) 22 761 82 05  
fax. (48) 22 761 90 51  
[www.otop.org.pl](http://www.otop.org.pl)



### 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-Podlissian Society for the Protection of Birds



Biebrza National Park (BPN)

### Main Sponsor:



The EU LIFE Nature Fund



### Additional Sponsors:



CEMEX Polska



Swarovski Optik



# Mścichy

Project site of the EU LIFE Nature project

Conserving Aquatic Warblers  
in Poland and Germany



## LIFE Project sites in Biebrza National Park Buffer Zone

The LIFE Project includes three areas in the buffer zone of the Biebrza National Park with a combined area of c. 1,060 ha. These are: Laskowiec-Zajki, Mścichy and Bagno Ławki-Szorce. The Mścichy site covers about 435 ha and is like the National Park included in the EU Natura 2000 site "Biebrza Valley".

"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."

## Why did we chose this area?

We chose the site because it is the site with the largest number of Aquatic Warblers in the buffer zone of the Biebrza National Park, but is not covered by any form of formal protection. In the year 2007, the site held up to 65 singing males, i.e. 2.5% of the Polish Aquatic Warbler population.

The birds favour the areas that are currently mown or have been mown in the recent past, but avoid those parcels that have been abandoned for more than a few years.

It is therefore very promising and necessary to implement active conservation measures in order to maintain the remaining habitat and to increase the area of suitable habitat.



photo: Małgorzata Górska

Mścichy

## Mścichy Project site characteristics:

The site is an area of peatland located to the west of the Biebrza National Park, between the park's border and the village of Mścichy. The vegetation is dominated by associations of the reedgrass *Calamagrostis stricta* and small sedges, which are being mown for hay once a year, in dry years even twice. The south-eastern part of the site borders on a small forest and is covered by denser stands of reeds and the reedgrass *Calamagrostis canescens*.

During spring, the site is flooded by water from snowmelt and rains, but also by floodwaters of the Biebrza river. Despite of past attempts to drain the area, the peat layer of up to 2 m thickness is still in good condition.

The site is well known amongst local and foreign birdwatchers, and thanks to its good accessibility, it is one of the Biebrza Valley's top birding spots. Apart from Aquatic Warblers, you can find here Breeding Garganeys, Corncrakes, Spotted Crakes, Black-tailed Godwits, Common Snipes and Bluethroats.

In the past, the whole site was used as hay meadows by farmers from the village Mścichy, and in some areas in the north of the site peat used to be cut on a small scale. Currently, only parcels close to the main access road and the village are still being used. This led to an accumulation of old biomass and a change in vegetation structure favouring higher and denser stands of reeds and canary grass over the original small sedges. The Aquatic Warbler is avoiding these areas.

photo: G.T. Klosowscy



Aquatic Warbler

## Conservation action

The aim of the project at this site is to work together with the local landowners to maintain and re-introduce extensive mowing. A management plan is being developed that recommends wildlife-friendly land use and gives guidance on how to realise this with the help of agri-environmental schemes. We aim to introduce a mowing regime that ensures that each parcel is mown at least once in two years, with a mowing date not before August that allows the Aquatic Warbler to bring up its second brood successfully. Where landowners are not interested in extensive land use, we try to purchase their parcels in order to ensure suitable conditions for breeding Aquatic Warblers.



photo: Lars Lachmann

Extensively used meadow