

Field days in Poland: EXPERIENCE ON PEATLAND RESTORATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE

6th–7th October, 2025

PROGRAMME

Field days are carried out as part of the SavePeatLands project co-financed by the European Union under the Interreg VI-A Lithuania-Poland cooperation programme.

During the visit, participants will learn about and discuss the challenges of protecting peatlands and wet meadows in the agricultural landscape of Poland, using the example of The Polish Society for the Protection of Birds (OTOP) private nature reserves. The main topics will be: water retention, biomass management, funding.

The guides: Łukasz Mucha (OTOP's reserves manager), Sviataslau Valasiuk (Cooperation Officer), Magdalena Gościński (Communication Officer), Aleksandra Pępkowska-Król (Agriculture Coordinator)

Notice! Please be aware that most activities during the visit will take place outdoors, including most meals. In case of unfavorable weather, we will move the meals indoors, but it will be an unheated building. We recommend bringing warm clothes, and rubber boots will be necessary on the second day of the visit.

Monday 6 th October, 2025	
8:30	Departure from Vilnius.
13:00-14:00	LUNCH: Field base of OTOPI in Trzcianem Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków Podlaskie Biuro Regionalne
14:00-15:00	Presentation on OTOPI's activities in the Podlaskie Voivodeship with a special focus on the pellet mill operating here from 2012 to 2021.
15:00-17:00	Presentation of the OTOPI's base in Trzcianne with particular emphasis on the mast park and composting facility.
17:00-19:00	DINNER: Networking dinner in Trzcianne, including a bonfire if the weather permits
19:00-19:30	Transfer to the guesthouse in Mońki. Accommodation place: https://www.zajazdmonki.pl/pl/ Location: Zajazd Mońki – Mapy Google

Tuesday 7 th October, 2025	
7:00-8:00	BREAKFAST: in the guesthouse
8:00	Transfer to Mścichy https://maps.app.goo.gl/dwNNeEYGZiKme61HA
8:30-12:30	A visit to three private nature reserves managed by OTOP, located in the buffer zone of the Biebrza National Park: 1. Mścichy, https://maps.app.goo.gl/dwNNeEYGZiKme61HA 2. Zajki, https://maps.app.goo.gl/bra6dsCDKUuwcJgg8 3. Szorce, https://maps.app.goo.gl/u6Dqzr1e13ukRuKo9 Discussion and demonstration of habitats subject to protection in nature reserves, a brief history of land use in this region, presentation of the greatest challenges related to restoring the hydrological regime in nature reserves surrounded by agricultural land owned by farmers. Bird watching.
12:30	Transfer to Trzcianne https://maps.app.goo.gl/5jk46nDxxz9C5sGz9
13:00-14:00	LUNCH: Field base of OTOP in Trzciannem
14:00	Departure. Travelling to Vilnius

OTOP

Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków (English: The Polish Society for the Protection of Birds, hereinafter OTOP) is Polish NGO established in 1991. OTOP's statutory goals are: to protect wild birds and their habitats, to spread knowledge about birds, their importance and threats thereto, to collect data on national bird populations, to develop and implement conservation measures, to carry out legal actions for the protection of birds and their habitats. OTOP is an association of 2000 members, employing 50 staff and supported by ca.600 volunteers (as of July 2025). OTOP is the only Polish partner of BirdLife International being the world's largest network for protecting birds.

OTOP operates on the national scale running headquarters in Warsaw and four regional offices, three of which are adjacent to the nature reserves managed by OTOP. The main protected objects in the OTOP's reserves are humid habitats (e.g. peatlands, semi-natural wet meadows) and associated bird species, including Europe's most threatened passerine Aquatic warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*). OTOP's peatland restoration activities are also carried out outside its reserves; for example, our organisation is currently participating in the international Life MultiPeat project, which implements, among other activities, active conservation measures for raised bogs in the Natura 2000 site Torfowiska Orawsko-Nowotarskie in southern Poland.

OTOP office and field base in Trzcianne (Podlaskie voivodship)

One of OTOP's field offices. Its staff manages OTOP's private nature reserves located in the Podlaskie Voivodeship:

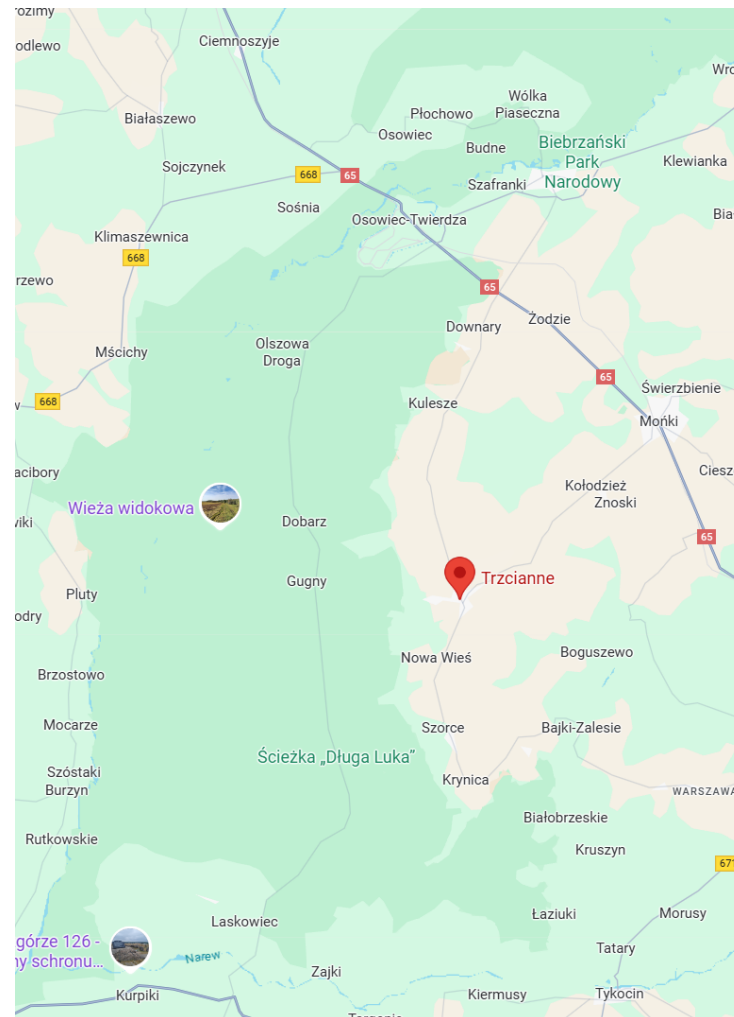
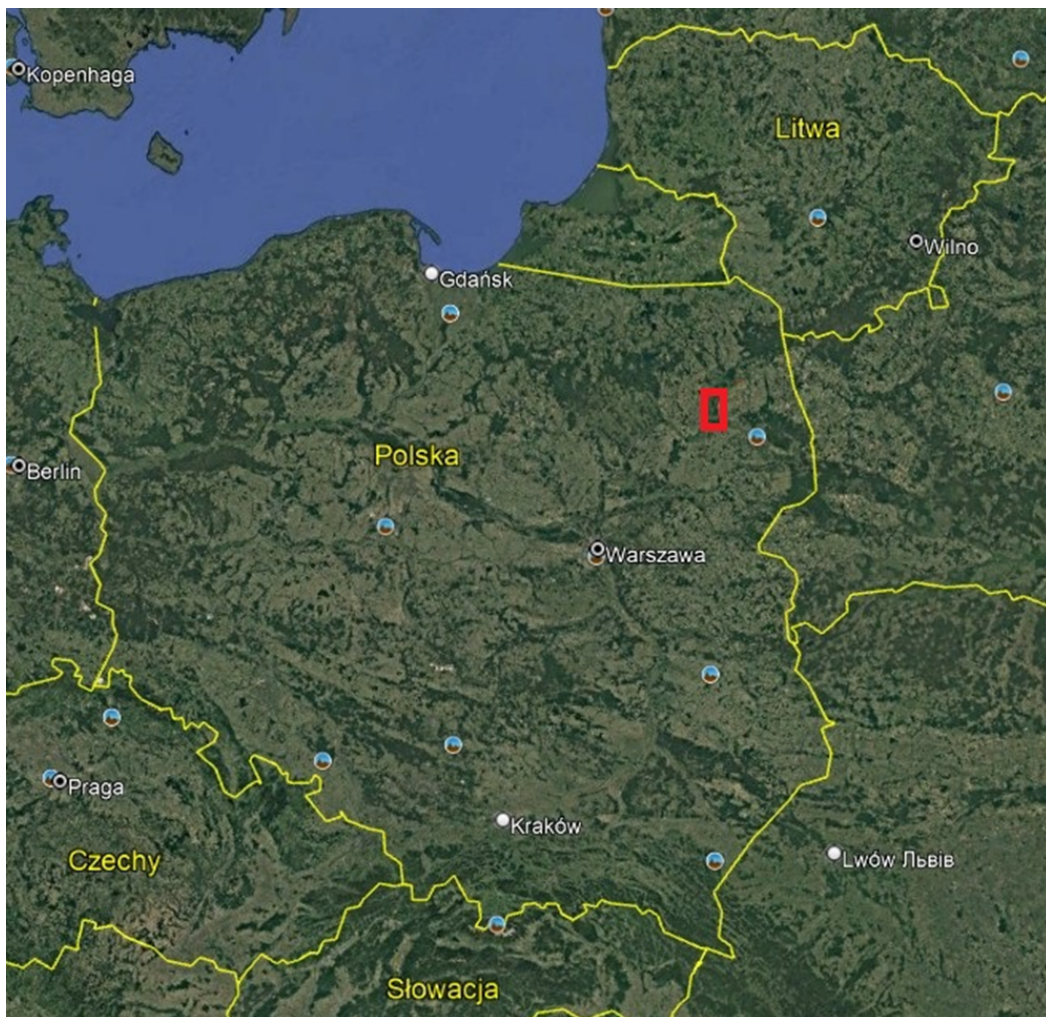
- Zajki
- Mścichy
- Szorce.

Machines used for active protection of the reserves are parked at the base (including ratraks used for mowing wet meadows and peat bogs). In the past there was a pelleting mill here, where biomass harvested in the reserves was processed. The pelleting mill was closed in 2021 for economic reasons. Currently, biomass that cannot be sold to farmers (poor-quality biomass) is processed into compost.

OTOP Private Nature Reserves in Podlaskie Voivodeship

In Podlaskie Voivodeship OTOP has 3 private nature reserves - Zajki, Mścichy and Szorce, which are located in the buffer zone of the Biebrza National Park and at the same time in a Natura 2000' area. Their total area is 350 ha. OTOP is constantly striving to extend the scope of its conservation efforts by purchasing new land adjacent to the reserves. The reserves protect wet meadows and peat bogs as well as several species of birds for which they are breeding habitats. The flagship species is the Aquatic warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, plus the following occur here: Black-Tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Common snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, White-winged tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*. The biggest challenge is the recurring drought almost every year and taking care to improve the hydrological conditions, as well as to manage the worst quality biomass (unsuitable for cattle breeding).

OTOP base in Trzcianne (Podlaskie region)



OTOP private nature reserves in Podlaskie region



ZAJKI

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/dwNNeEYGZiKme61HA>

Area of 450 ha
OTOP property 55 ha



MŚCICHY

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/dwNNeEYGZiKme61HA>

Area of 450 ha
OTOP property 225 ha



SZORCE

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/u6Dqzr1e13ukRuKo9>

Area of 110 ha
OTOP property 75 ha