

The project "Protection and Management of the Northern Gauja Valley" of LIFE-Nature Programme of the European Commission was implemented in the protected landscape area "Northern Gauja" within the period between 2003 and 2007. The project included:

- Inventory of nature values, planning of their protection and management;



- Restoration of approximately 300 ha of grasslands, mainly by cutting shrubs;



- Purchase of cattle herds and establishment of six pasture territories for grassland maintenance;



- Management of protected forest habitats, biologically valuable trees and lek sites of the Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* in the area of approximately 400 ha;



- Non-intervention regime ensured in about 3400 ha of valuable forests.



Useful internet sites:

Project "Protection and Management of the Northern Gauja Valley", Rural Partnership "Northern Gauja": www.zgauja.lv

North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve: www.biosfera.lv

Available support for management of grassland and forest habitats:

The Rural Development Programme for Latvia (2007-2013): www.zm.gov.lv

Legislation on environmental protection: www.vidm.gov.lv

Legislation on forestry: www.vmd.gov.lv

Management of protected nature territories:

Nature Protection Board: www.dap.gov.lv

Monitoring of observation of legislation on environmental protection:

State Environmental Service: www.vvi.gov.lv

Valmiera Regional Environmental Board of State Environmental Service: www.valmierasrvp.gov.lv

Madona Regional Environmental Board of State Environmental Service: www.madonasrvp.gov.lv

State Forest Service: www.vmd.gov.lv

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NORTHERN GAUJA

FROM PAST INTO FUTURE

For thousands of years Gauja has been flowing to the sea and every age has left its marks in the landscape of river valley.

There are, however, nature values, which have remained unchanged from the days of gone - Gauja's flow making steep banks, uncovering sandbanks and leaving old rivers beds.

Landscape on both river banks has changed during the history of civilisation along with changes in the management of Gauja valley.

When the man started farming, areas of forests decreased and were replaced by meadows, pastures and fields. Until the first half of the 20th century, there were a lot more open and park-like areas in Northern Gauja than there are now. It was for the benefit of species connected with meadow habitats such as the Corncrake *Crex crex* and the Roller *Coracias garrulus*.

During Soviet times, when agricultural land grew over, territories of forest increased in Gauja valley, thus decreasing the territories of characteristic mosaic landscape. In separate places, for example, in Vireši and Gaujiena municipalities, there were wide and intensely farmed fields; agricultural land was mellorated thus influencing hydrology of rivers and damaging natural habitats of several species of animals and plants.

In 2007 the four-year project of LIFE-Nature programme of the European Commission was finished; the main goals of this project were protection of forests and restoration and management of meadows and pastures in Northern Gauja. Activities implemented during the project along with availability of agri-environment subsidies made their contribution in restoration of mosaic of forests and meadows in one of the most outstanding places in Latvia from the point of view of landscape and nature values.

In what way shall landscapes of Northern Gauja be developed after the project? Will landowners be interested enough in continuing management of meadows and pastures? Will forest protection introduced during the project ensure preservation of endangered forest species?

At the moment Rural Development Programme for Latvia is the most important financial instrument in Latvia supporting management of habitats. In Northern Gauja, similarly as in other places in Latvia, the fate of meadows and pastures shall depend on the fact whether the financing available for maintenance of grasslands is sufficient, as well as on the possibilities offered by other types of management, for example, rural tourism and organic farming which would give an opportunity to restore and maintain viable rural businesses.

