



**LIFE Nature Project  
“Cross-border Protection of  
the Great Bustard  
in Austria“  
2005 - 2010**



[www.grosstrappe.at](http://www.grosstrappe.at)

**Successful protection of the West-  
Pannonian Great Bustard  
population**



# LIFE Project Great Bustard



Project beneficiary:

Austrian Society for Great Bustard Conservation

Project partners:

Government of Lower Austria, Nature Protection

Provincial Government of Burgenland, Conservation Department

EVN Netz GmbH

BEWAG Netz GmbH

VERBUND-Austrian Power Grid AG

ÖBB-Infrastruktur Bau AG

Co-financiers:

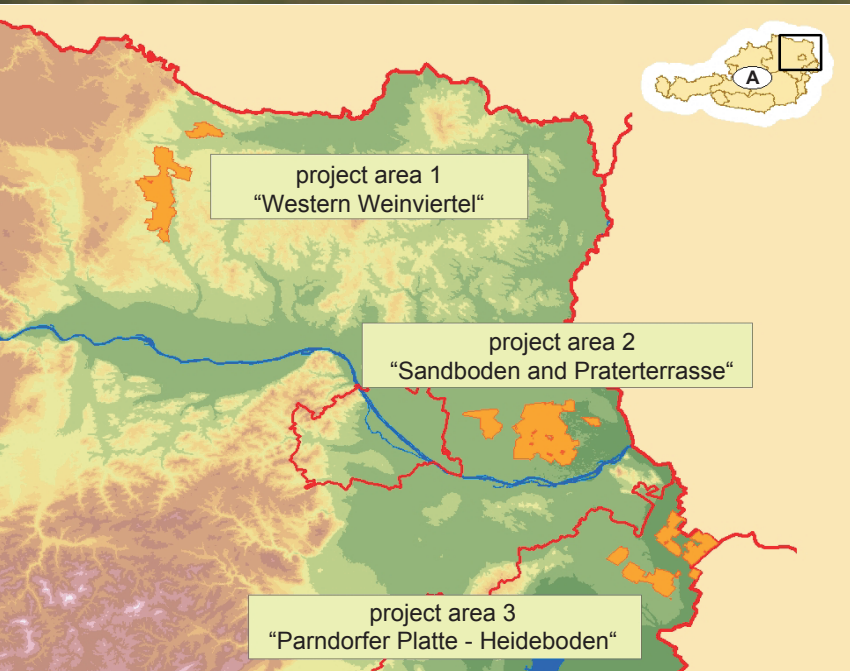
Ministry of Life

Project number:

LIFE05 NAT/A/000077

Project duration:

01.08.2005 - 31.07.2010



The three project areas in Austria.



# Objectives of the LIFE Project



A male Great Bustard is flying towards a 20 kV-power line, which was fortunately transferred into the ground within the project and is therefore no longer a risk for flying bustards.

The main aim of this LIFE project was the reduction of the most important mortality factor for adult Great Bustards in Austria, the collision with power lines. Thus, the result should be a long-term increase not only of the Austrian, but of the entire cross-border West-Pannonian population of the Great Bustard. To achieve this objective the Austrian Great Bustard habitats also had to be kept in good condition through bustard-friendly cultivation of numerous special Great Bustard fields. Furthermore on the basis of bustard protection the unique value of the cultural landscape and the need for integrated nature conservation in the framework of Natura 2000 und LIFE shall be communicated to the public.



# The Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)



The ideal Great Bustard habitat in Central Europe is an open, unfragmented and less disturbed farmland, extensively managed and with special Great Bustard fallows covering large areas, as shown above around the church of Wartberg.



Great Bustards are gregarious birds, usually living in small, unisex flocks. Adult Great Bustards predominantly feed on herbaceous vegetation (for example lucerne and oilseed rape), but they are also adept in catching large insects and mice.



# The Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)



The spectacular display is characteristic for Great Bustards. In a matter of seconds displaying males twist and turn their brownish grey wings and tail, in order to showcase the white underwing and undertail coverts as well as other white tracts of plumage that are normally hidden below the camouflage upperparts.



The nest of the Great Bustard, a shallow indentation, is often built in winter wheat. The usually two or rarely three eggs of a clutch are incubated for 25 to 27 days. Especially at the beginning of the incubation period breeding females can easily be disturbed. A single disturbance can lead to the abandonment of the clutch. Newly hatched chicks of Great Bustards weigh around 90 g and are precocial, being able to follow their mother immediately. During the first 2 to 3 weeks the chicks are mainly fed on insects by their mother.



# Implemented actions

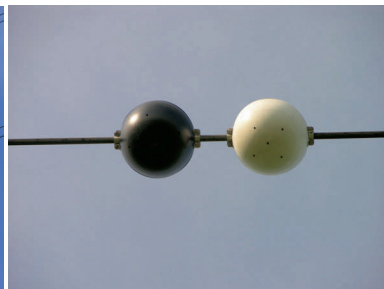
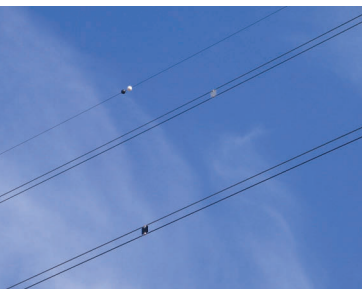


The transfer into the ground and the subsequent removal of a medium voltage power line in the project area Parndorfer Platte-Heideboden in July and October 2006, respectively.

In Burgenland and Lower Austria in only three years altogether ca. 47.4 km of medium voltage power lines have first been transferred into the ground and then the overhead cables and pylons have been removed. Therefore larger power line-free areas were recreated for Great Bustards by means of the LIFE project. In these areas the risk of collisions with power lines was eliminated. Furthermore high voltage power lines have been marked to improve their visibility.



The transfer into the ground and the subsequent removal of a medium voltage power line in the project area Western Weinviertel in May 2007 and March 2008, respectively.



High voltage power lines marked with bird warning balls and bird warning plates, respectively and the marking of a high voltage power line in July 2006.



# Implemented actions



Marking of high voltage power lines with bird warning flags in the project area Parndorfer Platte-Heideboden in October 2007.





# Implemented actions



A high voltage power line marked with bird warning balls in the project area Parndorfer Platte-Heideboden.

Within the project around 153 km of high voltage power lines have been marked with bird warning flags, bird warning plates and bird warning balls. They improve the visibility of the power lines and should therefore reduce the risk of collisions for Great Bustards and for other bird species. Due to these actions and due to further intensive conservation efforts such as the competent support of the Great Bustards and the extensive habitat management, the Austrian Great Bustard population increased from the breeding period 2005 (ca. 150 individuals) to 2010 (ca. 260 individuals) by more than 70 %. For maintaining living conditions and food supply for Great Bustards in Austria in a good state, an efficient cooperation of nature conservation with local farmers and hunters was necessary. Therefore around 550 farmers and more than 100 hunters were actively involved in the project and helped encouraged.





# Implemented actions



Farmers ensured - in consultation with the Great Bustard advisor – the access to rape fields for the Great Bustard in winter. Hunters carried out cross-preserve hunts with dogs to reduce the number of foxes.

Only through the collaboration of farmers, hunters and local politicians within the conservation project Great Bustard it was possible to create suitable breeding sites and protect them against disturbance. Farmers made use of the Austrian agri-environment scheme “ÖPUL“ by cultivating special fields and also ensured – if necessary – the access to food supply in winter. Farmers and hunters were helping to keep disturbances in the Great Bustard areas as low as possible and were also involved in the success control of the Great Bustard conservation actions (monitoring).



The preservation of ca. 5,500 ha of Great Bustard fields (special cultivated fallows, rape fields as winter feeding areas etc.), funded within the Austrian agri-environment scheme, will continue to be very important for the conservation of Great Bustards.



# Public relations



Numerous contributions on TV (BBC, ARD, ORF, 3Sat, ...), radio and in newspapers.



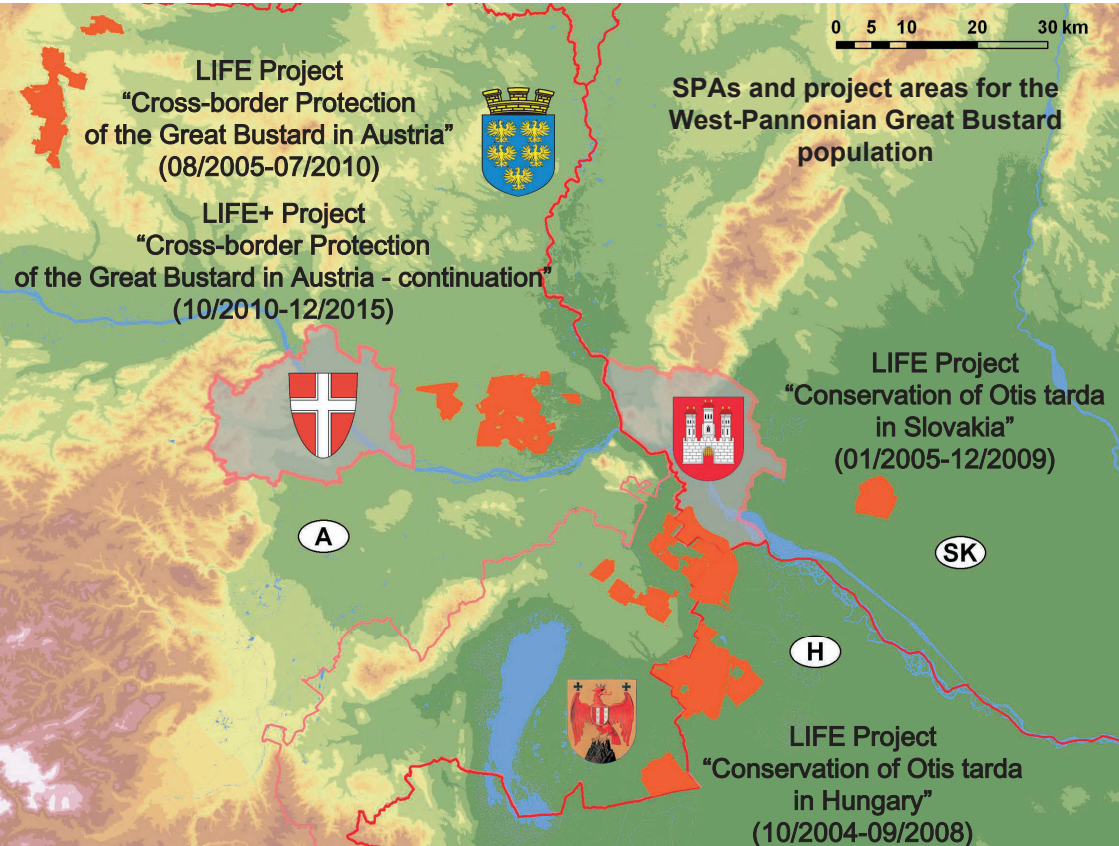
More than 50 events especially for farmers and hunters, but also for pupils including presentations followed by excursions.



On 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010 the official opening of the information and observation point at the church of Wartberg in Straning-Grafenberg took place in the presence of Landesrat Dr. Stephan Pernkopf, LJM ÖKR Dr. Christian Konrad, Sektionschef DI Günter Liebel and more than 180 visitors.



# The conservation will be continued!



The aim of the LIFE+ Project is the continuation of the successful concept of the LIFE Project "Great Bustard" in Austria until 2015 in all of the four important Great Bustard areas in Austria. As in two project areas the main mortality factor and therefore the main population threat have widely been removed (transfer of power lines into the ground and marking of power lines), further necessary burying of power lines and marking should take place, particularly in the project area Sandboden and Praterterrasse. As Great Bustards don't mind borders, the intensive cooperation between Austria and its neighbouring countries Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic will be continued within the Austrian LIFE+ Project. This serves for the conservation of the entire cross-border West-Pannonian Great Bustard population.

## Imprint

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Infrastruktur



**LIFE Nature** and these actions target the conservation of endangered species and habitats based on the EU Birds Directive and the Fauna Flora Habitats Directive, respectively. The protected area network **Natura 2000** contributes to the preservation of the animal and plant diversity in the wild and of their habitats all over Europe.



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