

# 6<sup>th</sup> REPORT OF THE FACE | BIODIVERSITY MANIFESTO



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FACE - European Federation for Hunting and Conservation

Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe's 7 million hunters as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation. FACE is made up of national hunters' associations from 37 European countries including the EU-27. FACE is supported by 7 associate members and is based in Brussels. FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use and has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987.

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# HUNTING AND CONSERVATION

6<sup>th</sup> REPORT OF THE FACE BIODIVERSITY MANIFESTO

**With a focus on hunters' contribution to implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**

Published in 2021







## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 6<sup>th</sup> report of the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto (BDM) is based on 470 initiatives undertaken by European hunters that contribute to biodiversity conservation. The report demonstrates how hunters actively conserve biodiversity via species and habitat management, research and monitoring as well as communication and awareness raising. While multiple actions are implemented, this report shows that hunters invest considerable resources into species conservation and the restoration of wetlands, farmland and forest habitats.

More specifically, this report focuses on how hunters' actions already contribute to achieving the targets set in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. While the EU failed to reach its 2020 target to halt biodiversity loss, the projects captured in the BDM demonstrate hunters' active commitment to nature conservation. The BDM offers a relevant framework to show how hunters are playing an active role in implementing the main targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

Among the main actions of the EU strategy, establishing more protected areas and restoring degraded ecosystems need to be delivered by 2030. While binding nature restoration targets are still under negotiation, BDM data show that hunters already deliver important conservation work in protected areas and help to restore ecosystems throughout Europe. This is why FACE decided to highlight the contribution of Europe's hunters to the achievement of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 goals.

The evidence presented in this report shows that over 137 projects (32 %) are undertaken on Natura 2000 sites, 41 % of the projects focus on protected species and 51 % have an important sustainable use dimension. This demonstrates the contribution of hunters to achieving target 1 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020.

Furthermore, 52 % of projects are focused on the conservation and restoration of habitats, 25 % on green infrastructure, and 26 % on ecosystem services. These actions are relevant to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Many projects are also focused on Invasive Alien Species (IAS).



# INTRODUCTION

After its failure to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010, the EU adopted in 2011, the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, which aimed to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU and help stop global biodiversity loss by 2020.

This is why FACE and its Members adopted the Biodiversity Manifesto (BDM) in 2010, which reflects the active commitment made by European hunters to biodiversity conservation, to ensure the sustainability of hunting for future generations.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 provided a framework on how to reverse biodiversity loss as well as to halt the degradation of ecosystems. Unfortunately, the implementation of the strategy was mostly a failure. There was some progress in four targets, but the state of biodiversity in agriculture and forest ecosystems has worsened since 2010. Substantial progress was made only with target number 5 Combat invasive alien species. It is obvious that the EU has missed its 2020 targets and that the new Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 has to be stronger with more clarity and ambition.

This report shows how rural actors, and more specifically hunters, will contribute to the implementation of the various targets and actions set in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. The BDM offers a relevant framework for such assessment as it is directly related to a number of key actions of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

In order to provide an overview of hunters' contribution to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, 470 examples (also called case studies, projects or initiatives) of conservation work undertaken by hunters have been assessed. By mapping these case studies against the actions of the BDM and other indicators (such as the collaborations that occurred or the type of funds used), trends have been identified and are highlighted in this report.



## CONTEXT: FACE BDM REPORTS

In 2013, FACE developed an online questionnaire aiming to gather evidence to evaluate the work undertaken by European hunters for nature conservation. The present report draws on over 470 initiatives undertaken by European hunters throughout Europe.

In 2015, FACE published its first BDM report, which presented how 181 conservation projects involving hunters are linked to the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. The report demonstrated how the BDM, through its actions, directly contributes to the EU's Biodiversity Strategy to 2020.

Because 2016 was dominated with discussions about the Fitness Check of EU nature legislation, the 2016 BDM report was focused on hunters' contribution to the implementation of the EU Nature Directives.

In 2017, the BDM report focused on the contribution of hunting to the conservation of farmland biodiversity. The reason was due to the European Commission's announcement to reform the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2020.

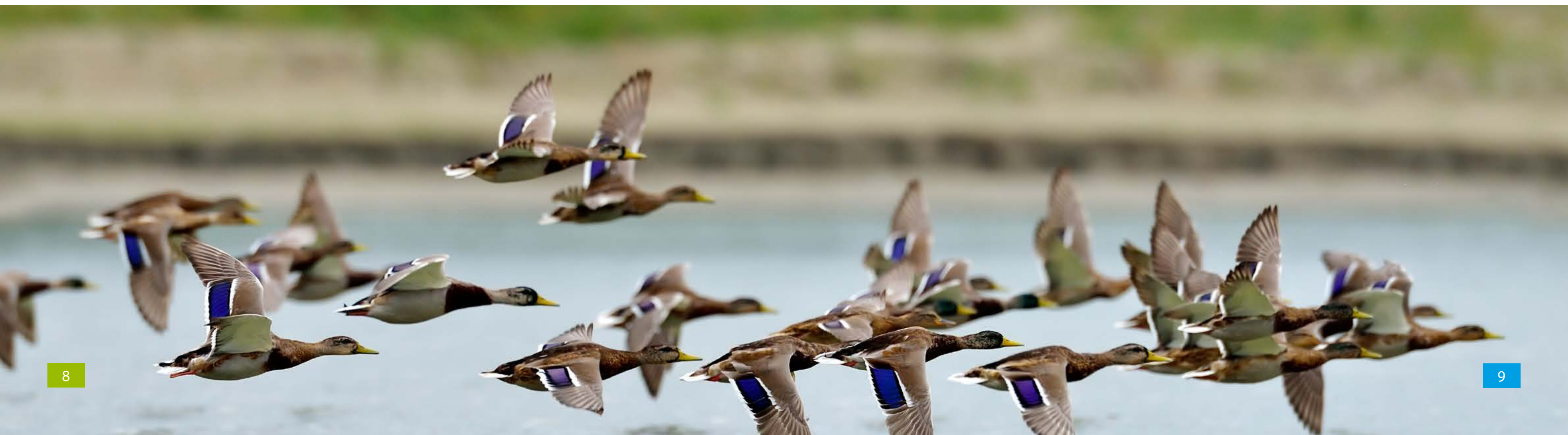
For 2018, the BDM report focused on the contribution of hunters to the monitoring biodiversity. This choice of focus was made due to the fact that EU Member States were required to submit their reports under both nature directives on the status of species and habitats of EU interest. More specifically, Member States were obliged to report on the status of all wild occurring birds as well as other species and habitats, under the Birds and Habitats Directives.

For 2019, the BDM report highlighted the contribution of hunters to achieve the targets set out in EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. Data were presented as well as the evaluation of the targets and how they were achieved by the EU. The fit was exceedingly good with 23 of the 34 actions in the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto directly contributing to the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

While the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 failed to halt biodiversity loss, this BDM report (2020) demonstrates yet again the important conservation work on the ground and how hunters already now align their efforts with the key elements of Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and bring nature back in our lives.

It is important to point out that the 470 case studies used for presenting this overview cannot be considered as an exhaustive list of what is actually happening on the ground. In the coming years, more examples will be gathered thereby improving our understanding of the conservation actions conducted by European hunters.

After presenting the key elements of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the relationship between the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto and the objectives of the new strategy for 2030 will be illustrated. An overview of the trends based on the case studies is presented together with some relevant highlights. Finally, best-practice case studies demonstrate in greater detail how hunting contributes to nature conservation objectives set to 2030. The report concludes with recommendations for the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.





# KEY ELEMENTS OF THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR 2030

The new biodiversity strategy aims to put European biodiversity on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of climate, people, and the planet. In the context of COVID-19, the strategy aims to improve societies' resilience to future challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change and spread of diseases.

The key elements therefore are:

- Restoring degraded ecosystems through binding targets
- Establishing a larger EU-wide network of protected areas
- Unlocking €20 billion per year for biodiversity
- Addressing the global biodiversity crisis

Hunters are committing their time and resources to restore important habitats, to conduct essential conservation actions in protected areas or to manage IAS as demonstrated by projects which are presented in this BDM report.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The following graph provides an overview of the initiatives undertaken by European hunters for biodiversity conservation. It shows the quantity and diversity of BDM-related actions that hunters implement. Most hunters' initiatives focus on species conservation, ensuring sustainable use and habitat restoration. This demonstrates hunters' commitment to conservation and their contribution to current EU nature policy goals, which ambitiously aimed to prevent biodiversity loss by 2030. These initiatives include managing priority habitats and species, both within and outside Natura 2000 sites, combatting Invasive Alien Species (IAS), promoting farmers' uptake in suitable agri-environmental schemes under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and tackling illegal killing.

### Proportion of case studies contributing to the sections of the BDM

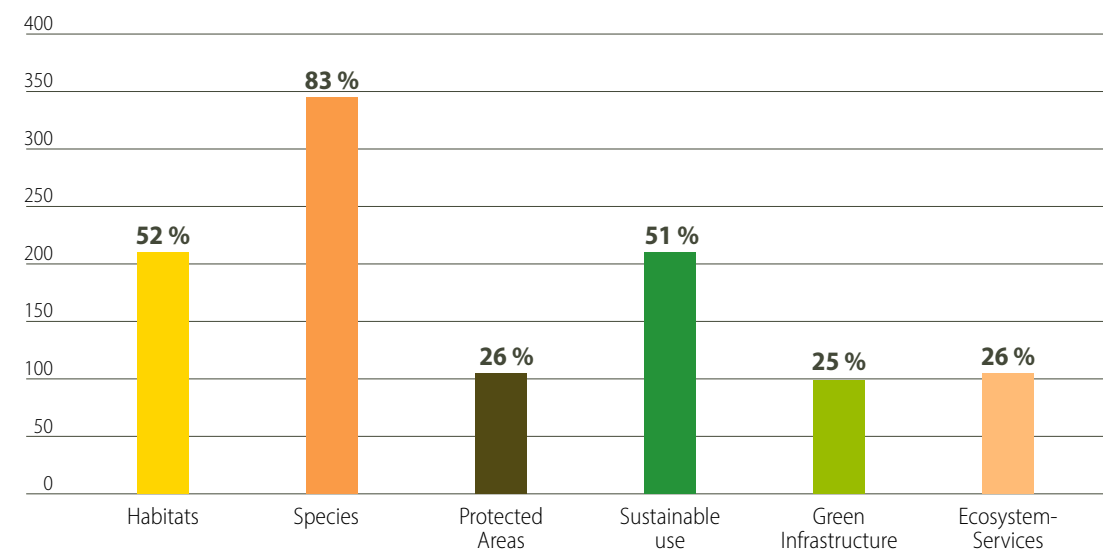


Figure 1. Summary of the 470 initiatives undertaken by hunters for nature conservation.

The majority (83%) of hunters' actions focus on species conservation, of which most deal with birds and interestingly, over 41% deal with protected species. In general, the category 'protected species' covers the species which are protected at the national level and are typically non-huntable. Out of the 470 case studies, 222 (52%) deal with habitat conservation with wetland and farmland habitats being the most common engaged with. The following graph gives a summary of the main actions undertaken by hunters in the BDM projects.

### Main actions conducted by hunters

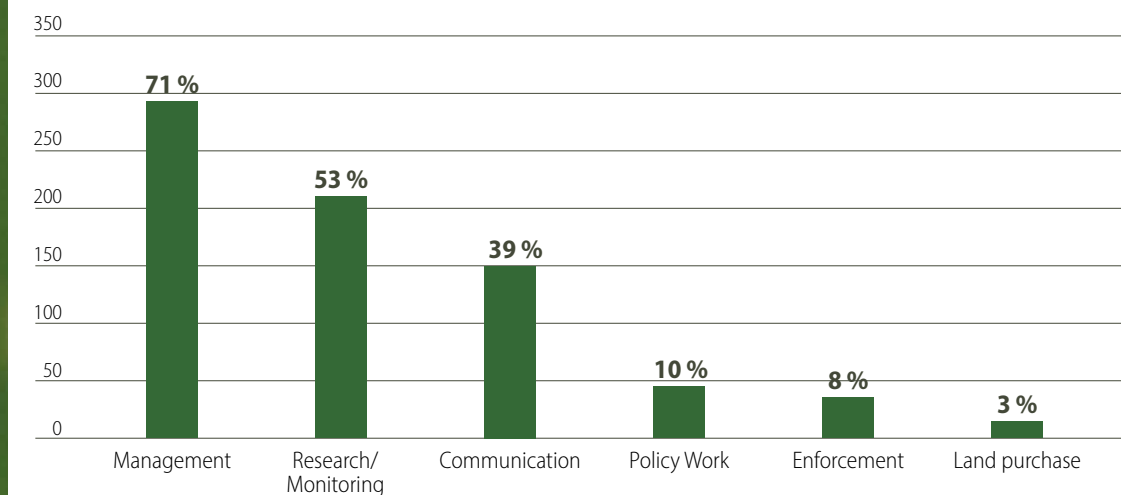
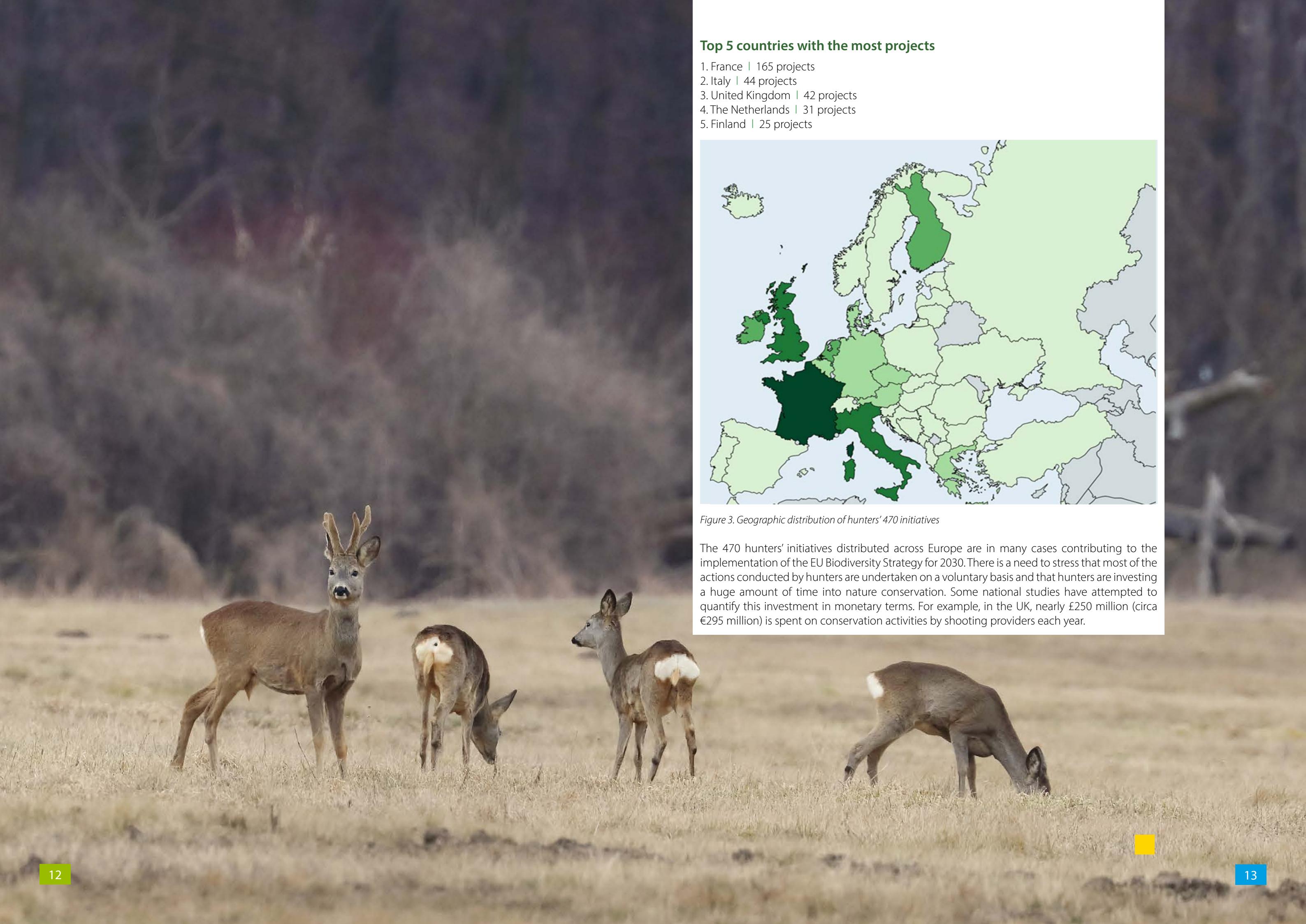


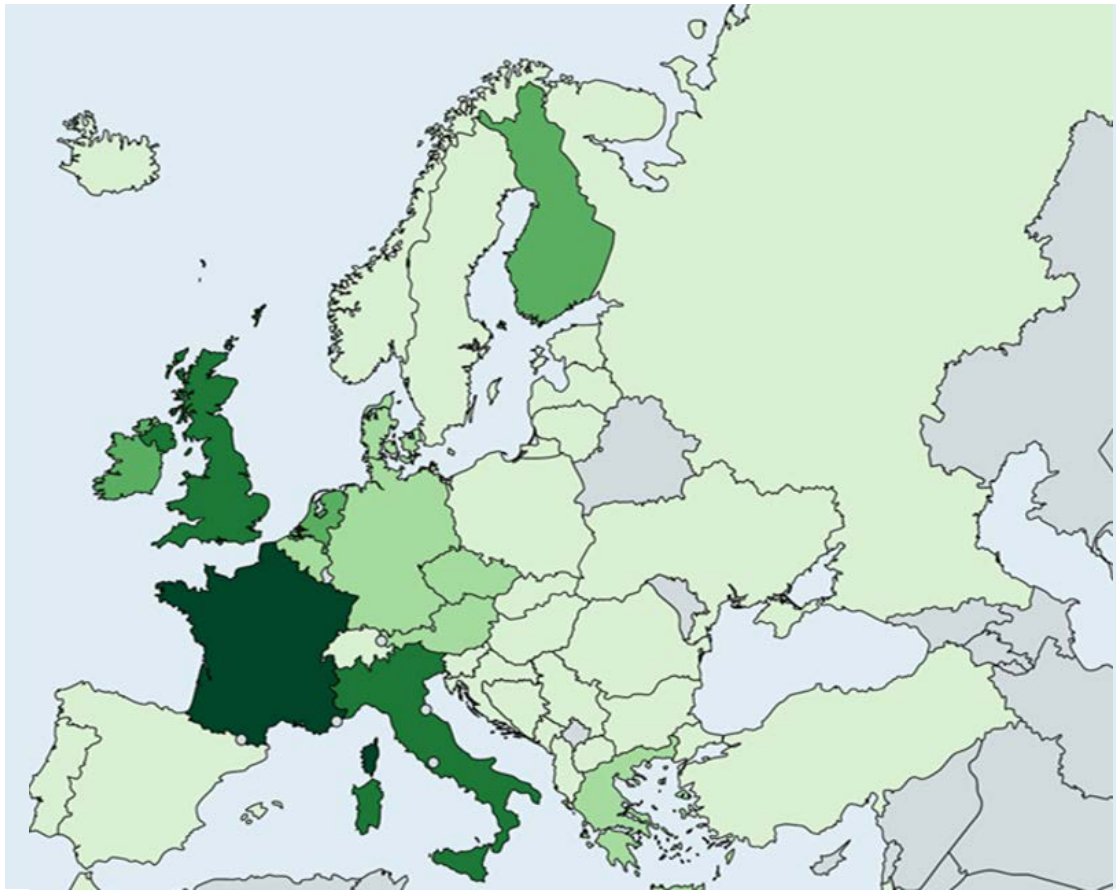
Figure 2. Summary of the main actions undertaken by hunters





**Top 5 countries with the most projects**

- 1. France | 165 projects
- 2. Italy | 44 projects
- 3. United Kingdom | 42 projects
- 4. The Netherlands | 31 projects
- 5. Finland | 25 projects



*Figure 3. Geographic distribution of hunters' 470 initiatives*

The 470 hunters' initiatives distributed across Europe are in many cases contributing to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. There is a need to stress that most of the actions conducted by hunters are undertaken on a voluntary basis and that hunters are investing a huge amount of time into nature conservation. Some national studies have attempted to quantify this investment in monetary terms. For example, in the UK, nearly £250 million (circa €295 million) is spent on conservation activities by shooting providers each year.



## HABITATS

"Protecting habitats is a fundamental means to conserve wild flora and fauna, thereby maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services. Ultimately it is through individual actions at grassroots level where a difference can be made."

FACE Biodiversity Manifesto



Hunters have undertaken actions aiming to maintain, restore or improve habitats in 282 case studies

This BDM section covers actions contributing to the key element “Restoring degraded ecosystems” of the new EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 through the maintenance and improvement of habitats as well as the inclusion of sustainable agriculture and forestry principles.

Types of habitats involved on hunters’ project

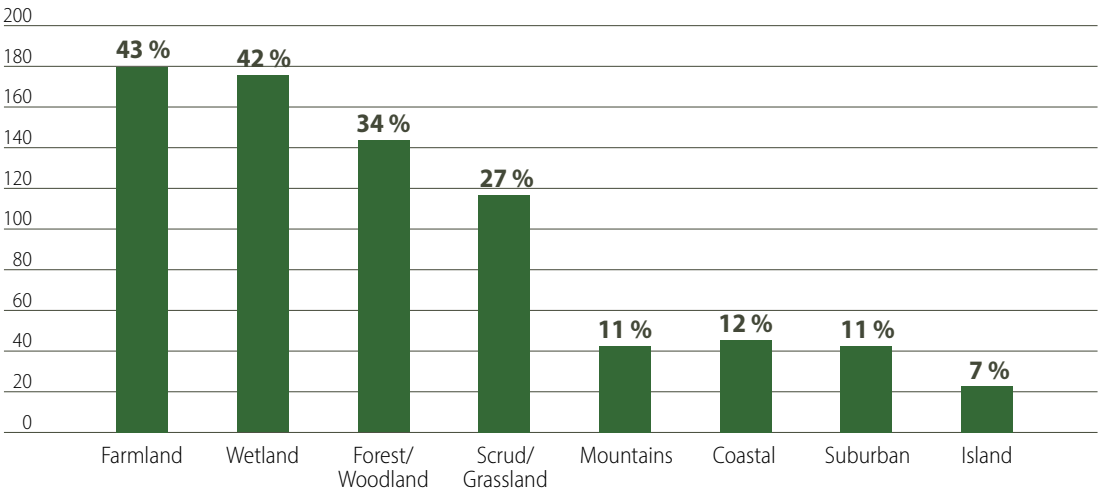


Figure 4. Types of habitats conserved/managed in BDM projects

In total, 52 % of the case studies are dedicated to habitat conservation’ with farmland and wetland habitats being the main habitat type engaged with. 43 % of projects are related to farmland habitats, and the reason is that hunters were often the very first group to notice the decrease of small game populations on Europe’s farmland, mostly due to intensification of agriculture. Hunters are also the ones to initiate actions against it.

42 % of projects were focused on wetlands, which typically relate to waterbird conservation projects such as the maintenance of open water sites and the creation of new wetlands for ducks, geese and waders. Despite that the EU failed to restore degraded ecosystems, hunters all around Europe have been helping in the restoration of habitats. The following case study is a good example of hunters’ involvement in habitat restoration.

The actions undertaken by hunters on farmlands mainly target three species; the Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), the European Hare (*Lepus europaeus*) and the Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus scotica*). To combat the decrease of partridges and hares, numerous actions are undertaken such as convincing farmers to leave space for wild plants and flowers, creating and managing ‘biodiversity’ areas, providing food and water in difficult periods and managing generalist predators.

Many projects also engaged with more than one habitat type. For example, it is typical for BDM projects that focus on the conservation of small game to work on both farmland habitats and woodland edges.

The majority of the BDM projects in the ‘mountain’ habitat type category related to the conservation of grouse species, typically Red Grouse in the UK and Ireland. For example, many Red Grouse projects in Ireland carry out habitat management (e.g. diversifying Ling heather), population monitoring, predator control as well as engaging with all interested stakeholders to ensure the long-term success of these projects.







## CASE STUDY

### Wildlife protection program Feld & Wiese, Germany

The Wildlife Protection Program Feld & Wiese (WFW) of the Landesjagdverband Rheinland-Pfalz e.V. is a project to promote biodiversity in open landscapes. The programme is part of "Aktion Grün", an action alliance within the framework of the Rhineland-Palatinate biodiversity strategy and was awarded in March 2020 as a project of the UN Decade of Biological Diversity. The WFW is financed 80% by funds from the Rhineland-Palatinate hunting tax and 20% by other association funds. The scope of the project is limited to Rhineland-Palatinate, but results and measures taken are applicable to other regions in Germany and Europe.

The WFW is based on two pillars: (1) Habitat improvement, e.g. through the creation of flower strips, flower areas, hedges, and beetle banks and (2) predator management through active promotion of animal welfare-friendly trapping.

In Rhineland-Palatinate, as in many other federal states in Germany, open landscapes represent a particularly sensitive habitat. The partridge is by far the biggest loser in the cultural landscape of Germany and Europe today. From 2009 to 2017, the German-wide breeding pair density per square kilometre decreased by 44%. The reasons for the decline in partridge, brown hare, and lapwing mostly relate to the intensification of agriculture. Around 62 hectares of land are lost every day in Germany to designate settlement or road infrastructure. Due to this ongoing land use, among other things high-quality habitats such as hedges and field margins are lost. Fragmented habitats and vast fields of monocultures are also having an extreme impact on the precious flora and fauna of open landscapes. To buffer all these negative effects and to prevent a further decline in open landscape species, the Wildlife Protection Program Feld & Wiese (WFW) was launched in 2017.

The Wildlife Protection Program Feld & Wiese (WFW) will run for five years until 2021. The goal is to restore the favourable conservation status for partridge, European hare, pheasant and other species in the fields and meadows of Rhineland-Palatinate. In addition to the species that are subject to hunting law, the measures taken by the project also benefit other key species of open landscapes, such as the skylark, the lapwing, and the Common hamster. In order to help all these species to regain a positive population development, the WFW will continue to promote a close cooperation between the hunting community, the agricultural sector and responsible authorities.

#### Contact and Sources:

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## SPECIES

"As hunters, we will continue to work with positive incentives to conserve not only huntable species but all species."

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Hunters have undertaken actions aiming to improve knowledge and manage species of interest in 352 case studies

Healthy and resilient ecosystems depend on giving wildlife species the conditions they require. The continued intensification of agriculture makes the need to conserve species and their habitats more urgent than ever. The new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 aims to promote the maintenance and improvement of habitats as well as the inclusion of sustainable agriculture and forestry principles.

Groups of species concerned by hunters' actions

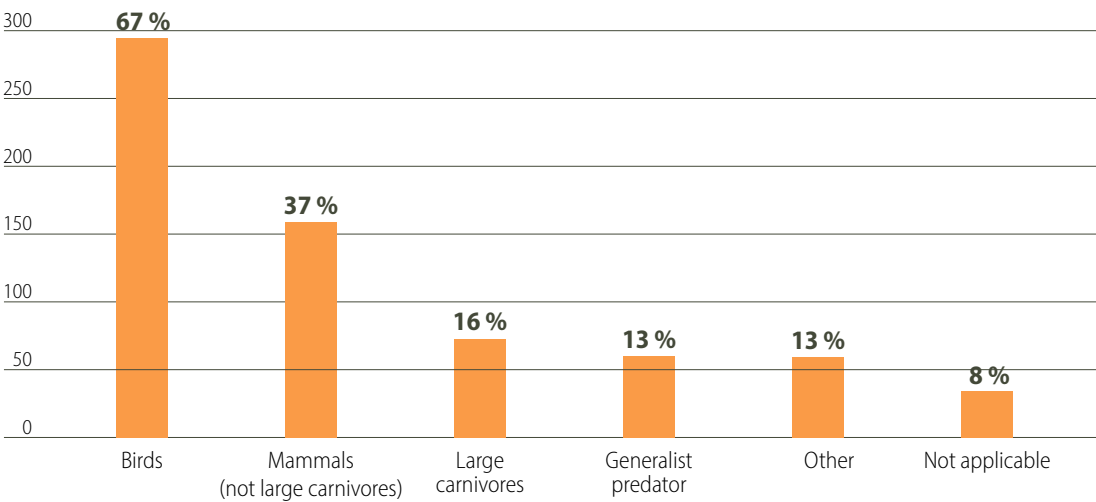


Figure 5. Types of species engaged within BDM projects



Of the 470 BDM projects, 83% focus on species conservation. This high percentage is understandable as hunters are actively involved in conserving and managing a variety of species – typically referred to as 'wildlife management'. These can involve re-establishing or managing Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), controlling generalist predators like the North American Mink (*Neovision vision*), or engaging in the management of large carnivores, such as the conservation of Lynx (*Lynx lynx*) through LIFE projects.

Many BDM projects that are focused on the conservation of ground-nesting birds also involve predator management. Similarly, most species conservation/management projects involve some form of monitoring, whether it involves documenting the number of breeding pairs during spring (before breeding) or monitoring in autumn to assess the levels of productivity to ensure a sustainable harvest over the hunting season.

Types of species concerned by hunters' actions

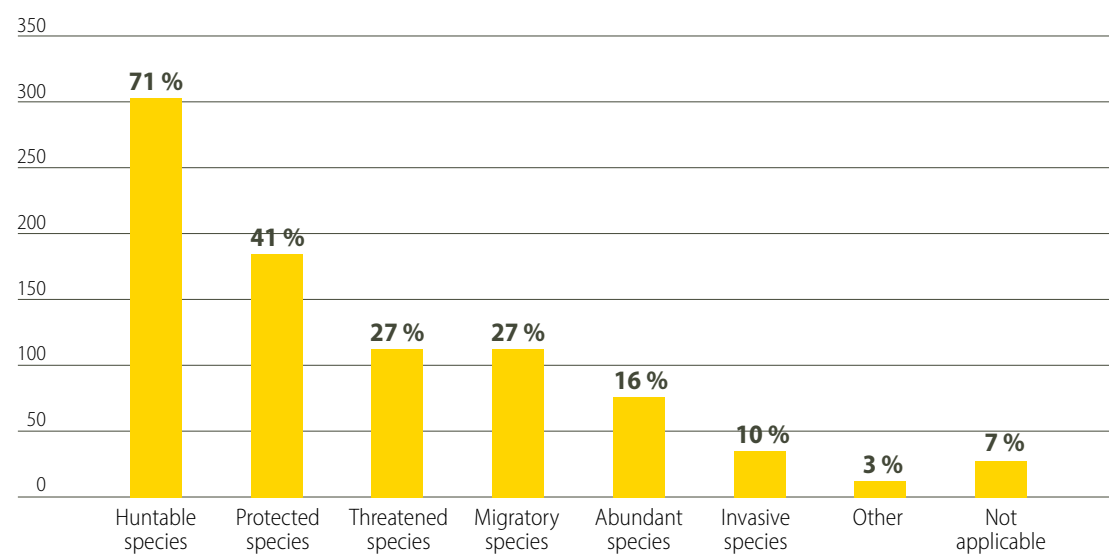


Figure 6. Categories of species engaged with in BDM projects

41 % of the species concerned by hunters are protected species, both on national and international level under the nature directives. 10% of the species concerned by hunters were specifically focused on Invasive Alien Species (IAS), via monitoring and eradication. The EU made substantial progress, through the adoption of the Regulation on Invasive Alien Species in 2014. European hunters are playing a key role in the eradication of IAS as shown in the following French/German case study.





## CASE STUDY

### Control of invasive nutria in cities, Germany - France

Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) are large, web-footed rodents that are more agile in water than on land. They live in burrows, or nests, never far from the water. The nutria is similar to the beaver but is smaller with about 60 centimeters in length. Nutria have a round tail and yellow-orange rodent teeth. Like the smaller muskrat, the nutria cause damage in many places because they dig their burrows into embankments and dikes.

Nutria originally lived in South America. Decades ago, specimens escaped or were released from Eastern European and East German fur farms. They spread across almost all of Europe. Since 2016, the nutria population has roughly doubled in areas examined by the German Hunting Association. Nutria is on the Invasive Alien Species list of EU concern since July 2016. When nutria are introduced into the environment, they can quickly graze the landscape, eliminating important flora. Further, scientists have been observing for years that nutrias are becoming omnivores, attacking freshwater clams and thus breaking the food chain.

Nutria have become a destructive problem worldwide, as far as California to Germany. They have no natural enemies and can give birth to several young, multiple times a year. In Haguenau, France, along the German border, the Haguenau town council decided to take action against the invasive alien species. Although nutria look harmless and cute, in fact they are voracious and destructive: "Nutrias cause us great problems because they dig on the banks of water, destroy embankments and even undermine dikes," complains Thomas Schulz from the Schwalm Association in Brüggen.

In the spring of 2017 alone, about 70 nutria were counted by the city administration in a distance of about 500 meters. The stream has doubled in width due to the erosion caused by nutria in the last 10 years. The damage was estimated at about 1 million euros by the city administration.

In the urban area described, it is not possible to use a rifle, shotgun, traps or even poison, due to the danger to people, pets, cars and houses being too great. Therefore, the city of Haguenau came to the Bowhunting Association Alsace (ACABR - Association des chasseurs à l'arc du Bas-Rhin) with the question whether nutria could be reduced in urban areas by hunters with bow and arrow.

The project was launched on 2 July 2017 by 27 hunters, consisting of members of the Alsatian Bow hunting federation (ACABR) and the German Bowhunting Association (DBJV). Four hunts took place in the early hours of the morning. The data collection on the nutrias, which was subsequently examined at the Pathological Institute of the Veterinary University of Hannover, was carried out on-site by means of a survey questionnaire (designed by the Scientific advisory board "bowhunting").

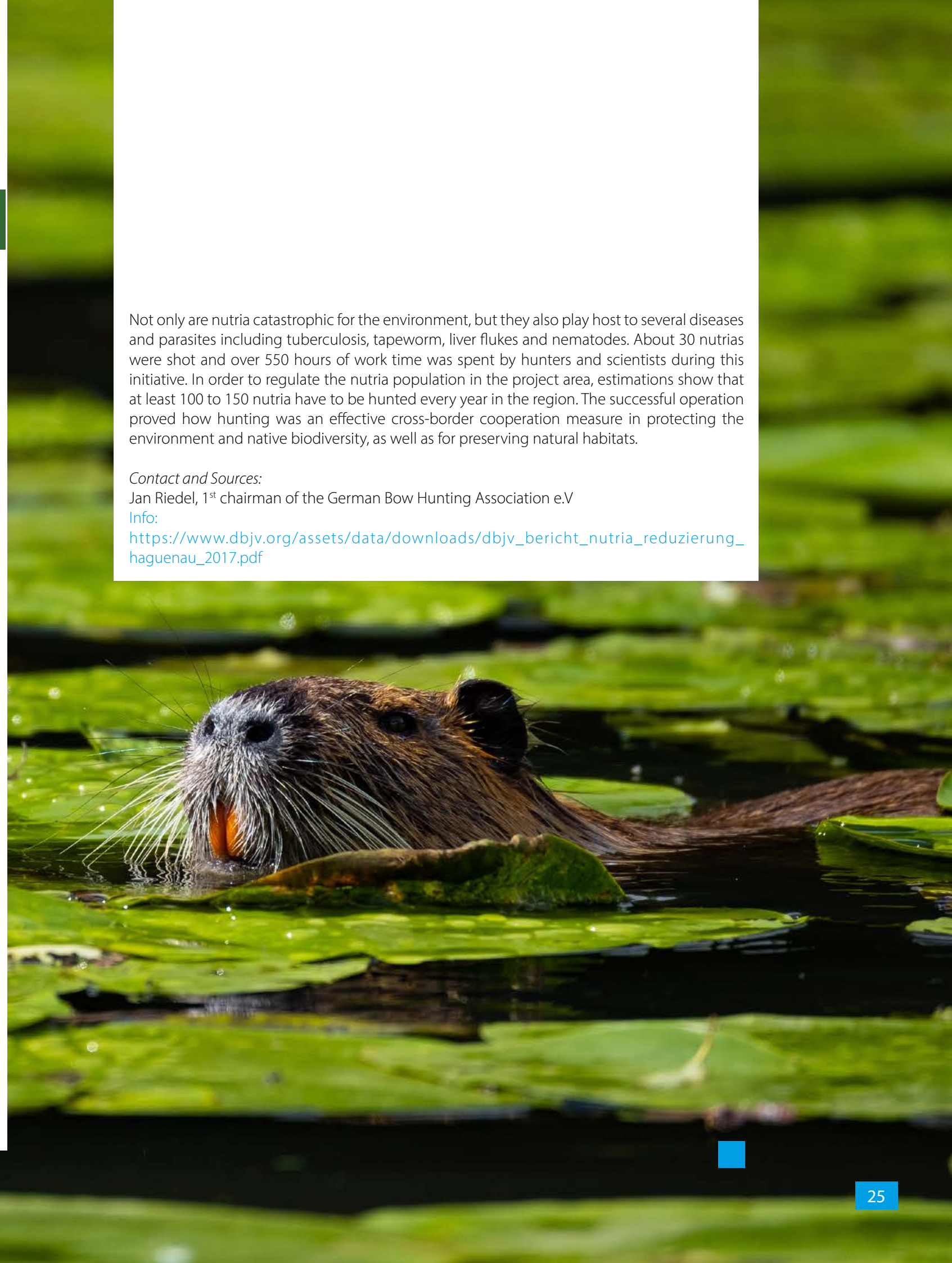
Not only are nutria catastrophic for the environment, but they also play host to several diseases and parasites including tuberculosis, tapeworm, liver flukes and nematodes. About 30 nutrias were shot and over 550 hours of work time was spent by hunters and scientists during this initiative. In order to regulate the nutria population in the project area, estimations show that at least 100 to 150 nutria have to be hunted every year in the region. The successful operation proved how hunting was an effective cross-border cooperation measure in protecting the environment and native biodiversity, as well as for preserving natural habitats.

#### Contact and Sources:

Jan Riedel, 1<sup>st</sup> chairman of the German Bow Hunting Association e.V

#### Info:

[https://www.dbjv.org/assets/data/downloads/dbjv\\_bericht\\_nutria\\_reduzierung\\_haguenau\\_2017.pdf](https://www.dbjv.org/assets/data/downloads/dbjv_bericht_nutria_reduzierung_haguenau_2017.pdf)





## PROTECTED AREAS

"The importance of Protected Areas for nature and biodiversity cannot be overstated; in particular the Natura 2000 network provides an excellent basis for nature conservation in the EU. This Network also benefits from the fact that it is based on the principles of conservation and sustainable use, ensuring lasting coexistence with human activities and biodiversity conservation."

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## Hunters undertake actions related to management and awareness raising about protected areas in 252 case studies

One key element of the new Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 is the improving and widening of Europe’s network of protected areas. This BDM section highlights the important conservation actions undertaken by hunters in protected areas and more specifically in the Natura 2000 network. As already stated in the “Guide to Sustainable Hunting under the Birds Directive” (EC, 2007), it needs to be therefore reinforced that there is no general presumption against hunting in Natura 2000 areas under the nature directives.

Status of the areas where actions are undertaken

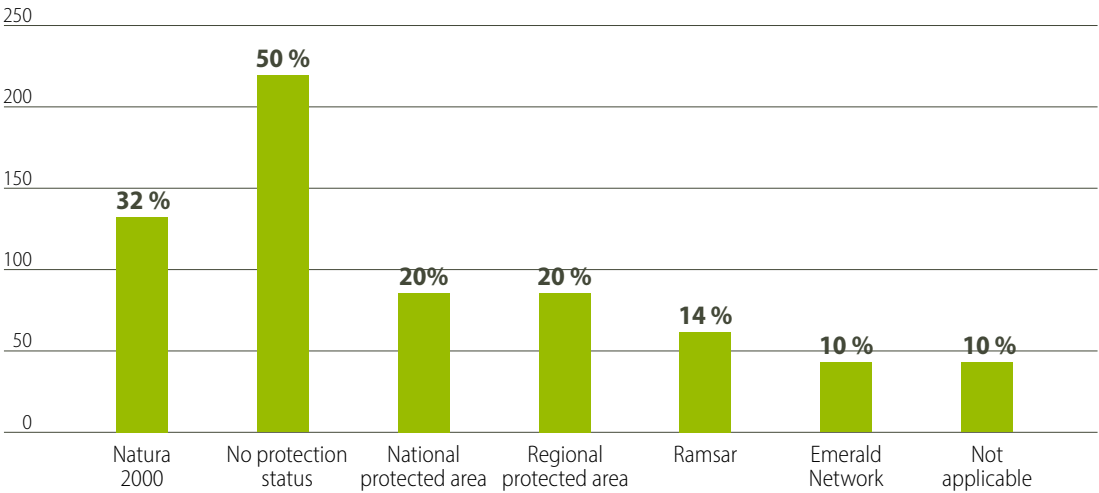


Figure 7. Status of areas where BDM projects are undertaken

This evidence presented in this report shows that 32 % of the projects are undertaken on Natura 2000 sites, which support previous recommendations to enhance the mutual benefits between hunting and Natura 2000.

The EU’s Natura 2000 Network, which conserves Europe’s most endangered species and habitats, is one of the most evident achievements of the nature directives. This Network benefits from the fact that it is based on the principles of conservation and sustainable use, ensuring lasting coexistence with human activities and biodiversity conservation, as such it is not in contradiction with hunting.

The evidence also shows that many Annex I listed birds (under the Birds Directive) and species protected by the Habitats Directive benefit from the actions of hunters.

# CASE STUDY

## Black Grouse conservation, Poland

The Black Grouse triggers the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Natura 2000 Network in EU Member States. In recent years, the Polish population of Black Grouse has declined significantly to an estimated 200 males remaining in several isolated populations. In the first half of the 20th century, there were tens of thousands of individuals. In response to the decline, the Polish State Forests joined a major project to conserve the Black Grouse (2017-2022). The work involves 18 organizational units of the State Forests and is undertaken in close cooperation with key stakeholders including hunters.

Without active conservation efforts, most remaining populations would disappear. The project works with hunters on habitat conservation and predator management with a focus on Fox and Raccoon Dog. It also includes a reintroduction programme where over 370 individuals have been reintroduced before 2020. It is important that these birds are best adapted to life in the wild, hence those translocated from wild populations and those reintroduced using the “born to be free” method, and are considered particularly valuable individuals. Constant monitoring is carried out, thanks to which up-to-date data on the black grouse population is available.

Contact and Sources:  
 Mateusz Grzębkowski (General Directorate of the State Forests)  
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## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

"More should be done to identify and promote the role of hunters in the cooperative management of Green Infrastructure. This should be supported by incentive measures for hunters and their local organisations to ensure that these areas are managed as part of wider landscape management objectives."

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To meet the requirements of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU wants to unlock at least €20 billion a year for spending on biodiversity and green infrastructure. The Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 highlights the importance of setting up ecological corridors to allow for species migration, and to enhance and maintain healthy ecosystems. For decades, hunters have been taken their own financial means in their hands to develop connectivity and wildlife corridors. Related projects are presented in this BDM section.

25% of BDM projects contribute to the principles of Green Infrastructure (see Figure 1). The data show that hunters undertake actions contributing to Green Infrastructure principles in 107 case studies.

## CASE STUDY

### Wild game on the road, Estonia

Hunters have installed reflectors at accident black spots along highways, which reflect the headlights of moving cars as beams of light into the forest. Thereby, keeping wild animals (especially large carnivores) away from the roads and the threat of cars. The project covers 17 road sections comprising 8.5 kilometres of roadways in Estonia. Around 600 reflectors have been installed to date throughout Estonia.

Car accidents involving wild animals have been a common problem across Europe, since the birth of the motor vehicle. These accidents put both, wild animals and motorists, in great danger. It is very common for such an accident to result in the death of the animal. Drivers have also been seriously injured – some also losing their lives. Further, such accidents also cause serious damage to vehicles. On average it costs 2,500 euros to restore a vehicle that has been involved in a wildlife accident. But there is a record of damage on the higher end of the scale, amounting to near 30,000 euros.

In Estonia alone, over 1000 wild animals die from road accidents every year. Many of these species in danger are well known animals, such as the: Moose (*Alces alces*), red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), bear (*Ursus arctos*), wolf (*Canis lupus*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*), and fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). This project ensures the conservation of many of these invaluable species and their habitats.

This project was developed and funded by Estonian hunters with support from an Estonian insurance company (IF). A study is being developed by the Estonian University of Life Sciences alongside the project to gather research and collect data on the effectiveness of the reflectors in protecting wild animals.

Alongside the reflectors' initiative, the team is working simultaneously on creating a map application to register data on where road accidents occur, in order to locate popular animal crossings. The team will continue to provide communication and education (for different target audiences, e.g. hunters and the wider public). The project is expected to take place from 2020 to 2023.

Contact and sources:

<http://www.ejs.ee/ulukikahjud>

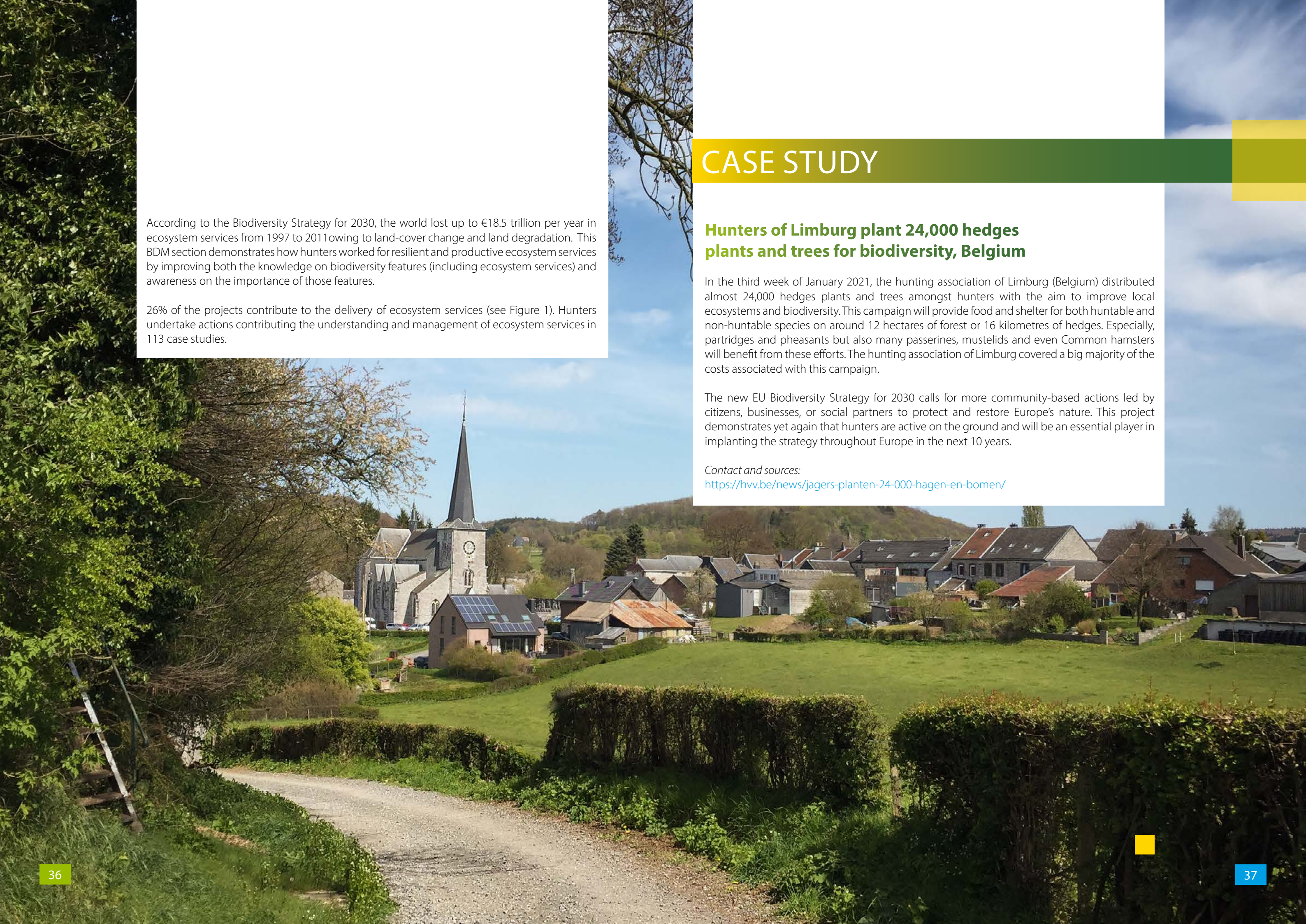


## ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

"It is often hunters as both users of ecosystem services and in part managers of ecosystems that actively conserve this wider landscape, contributing to ecosystem resilience and restoration."

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According to the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the world lost up to €18.5 trillion per year in ecosystem services from 1997 to 2011 owing to land-cover change and land degradation. This BDM section demonstrates how hunters worked for resilient and productive ecosystem services by improving both the knowledge on biodiversity features (including ecosystem services) and awareness on the importance of those features.

26% of the projects contribute to the delivery of ecosystem services (see Figure 1). Hunters undertake actions contributing the understanding and management of ecosystem services in 113 case studies.

## CASE STUDY

### Hunters of Limburg plant 24,000 hedges plants and trees for biodiversity, Belgium

In the third week of January 2021, the hunting association of Limburg (Belgium) distributed almost 24,000 hedges plants and trees amongst hunters with the aim to improve local ecosystems and biodiversity. This campaign will provide food and shelter for both huntable and non-huntable species on around 12 hectares of forest or 16 kilometres of hedges. Especially, partridges and pheasants but also many passerines, mustelids and even Common hamsters will benefit from these efforts. The hunting association of Limburg covered a big majority of the costs associated with this campaign.

The new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 calls for more community-based actions led by citizens, businesses, or social partners to protect and restore Europe's nature. This project demonstrates yet again that hunters are active on the ground and will be an essential player in implanting the strategy throughout Europe in the next 10 years.

*Contact and sources:*

<https://hvv.be/news/jagers-planten-24-000-hagen-en-bomen/>



# CONCLUSION

The 6th Report of the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto shows the diversity of work undertaken by hunters to benefit nature conservation. The initiatives differ in terms of their size, target, location, type of action and duration but each of them shows that hunters are actively engaged in biodiversity conservation in Europe.

This report shows that hunters, in conjunction with a large group of stakeholders (public authorities, environmental NGOs, research bodies, landowners, farmers, foresters, institutions), are active in the conservation of a wide range of habitats and species in Europe. Most of the 470 case studies include actions engaging wetland habitats and farmland habitats. These results are unsurprising given the decline of species due to the intensification of agriculture linked to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

## Protected Areas

Of interest is a large quantity of projects that are undertaken on Natura 2000 sites. The fact that 32 % of the projects occur on Natura 2000 sites demonstrates hunters' commitment to supporting this important network of protected areas in terms of monitoring, conservation and restoration. It is clear that Natura 2000 needs the support of European hunters. In this context, it is widely known that some of the most important wildlife sites in Europe have survived the pressures of development and destruction due to the interests of game management. Hence, this commitment to nature conservation for sensitive habitats and species existed long before the nature directives were born. Their ancient and voluntary passion to preserve nature areas has, in cases, also contributed to the development of the Natura 2000 network. With respect to the proposed new category of strictly protected areas, it is important that hunters remain active partners with regard to site and species management for the benefit of ecosystems. In many countries, hunting contributes to effective conservation efforts by hunters, for example, in managing ungulates and invasive species, as well as controlling animal diseases. It is therefore of immense importance that hunters are active partners in Europe's strictly protected areas including national parks.

## CAP reform

Importantly, the next CAP must be implemented at national level in a way that ensures greater support to farmers within the Natura 2000 Network. It must also include support for areas of HNV (High Nature Value) farming by making it mandatory for Member States to incentivise sustainable agriculture (and to prevent land abandonment) in these areas. The European Commission should ensure that Member States' CAP Strategic Plans include results-based agri-environmental schemes that are locally-designed targeting clear ecological outcomes. Such agri-environmental schemes would be supported by Europe's hunting community to the benefit of a wide range of species and habitats.

## Implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

The evidence presented in this report shows that over 137 projects (32 %) are undertaken on Natura 2000 sites, 41 % of the projects focus on protected species and 51 % have an important sustainable use dimension. This demonstrates the contribution of hunters to achieving one of the main actions of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. 52 % of studies are focused on the conservation and restoration of habitats, 25 % on green infrastructure, 26 % on ecosystem services and 100 % of them can be considered as investing in nature. These actions are relevant, in particular, to key actions of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Many projects also focus on the management of Invasive Alien Species, which is a key action of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

The projects captured in the BDM demonstrate hunters' commitment to conservation and their contribution to EU nature policy goals, which ambitiously aim to prevent biodiversity loss by 2030.

## FACE's recommendations for the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 in light of the evidence presented in this report:

- The most relevant EU legislative instruments for biodiversity conservation are the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the EU Nature Directives and the Water Framework Directive. Better use and application of these instruments has the potential to turn the trend in biodiversity loss.
- Support is required from people living in rural areas in delivering biodiversity, by providing mechanisms for equitable benefit sharing, and promoting policies for sustainable use.
- A disproportional focus on species protection will increase resistance and alienate many rural stakeholders. Motivation should be created bottom-up, not the other way around. FACE's network could be instrumental in this.
- Strictly protected areas must not discriminate hunters, which are a vital stakeholder group in ensuring the management of many species and habitats.
- The major conservation problem for most species is the degradation, destruction and/or lack of (good quality) habitat. Countering this problem with ambitious restoration targets focused on degraded ecosystems and habitats (not species and protected areas) should be given the highest priority including in the context of the CAP Strategic Plans currently being drafted by Member States.
- To complement the Natura 2000 network, proper funding and effective habitat conservation measures are required, which allow pragmatic and locally-led approaches to conservation and sustainable use (incentive based, adaptive to changes in species composition or habitat type).
- Measurable targets require monitoring, which in return needs coordination and proper funding for long-term funding.



## General comments on the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

The overall 2050 vision remains valid - *By 2050, European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides – its natural capital – are protected, valued and appropriately restored...* However, as the 2020 headline target for halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 was not reached, it is essential that an incentive- and community-based approach is taken in the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

Following the adoption of the European Green Deal and Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, there must be no delay in the role out of an action plan for EU and Member State actions. The EU Action Plan for nature, people and the economy arrived too late in the previous policy cycle, partly due to the resources devoted to the fitness check of the Nature Directives (2015-2016).

### Support from rural people/bottom-up motivation

Most of Europe's biodiversity can be found in rural areas. New approaches to biodiversity conservation should include mainstreaming nature protection outside protected areas, such as via other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM)<sup>2</sup>. This can include hunting areas that maintain natural habitats and other flora and fauna as well as viable populations of hunted and non-hunted native species.

Through legislation, we need to ensure that those living in the countryside can keep on living in the countryside, as active management can play an important role in maintaining and improving the condition of certain habitats. It also means, as is evident from the Nature Directives, that we need to take account of economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local needs.

The evidence presented in this report shows that hunters' interest in nature motivates them to conserve it. The solutions and the challenges for the future are to promote the sustainable use of nature so that hunters and other stakeholders have a direct interest in it. When such positive synergies are in place, the conservation of nature becomes effortless.

Furthermore, incentives can play an important role in biodiversity conservation. This could include properly rewarding farmers for engaging in biodiversity-friendly farming but could also include rewarding hunters for taking biodiversity actions with hunting opportunities.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf> and [https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/recognising\\_and\\_reporting\\_oecms\\_-\\_iucn\\_technical\\_report\\_-\\_august\\_2019.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/recognising_and_reporting_oecms_-_iucn_technical_report_-_august_2019.pdf)

## Restoration

FACE believes that there is great need to focus more on restoration of degraded ecosystems/habitats for flora and fauna. Good quality habitats and ecosystems is the basis for thriving species. However, the EU will not achieve targets related to habitat through protected areas alone, so restoration and other area-based conservation measures (OECM) must be integrated into the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Binding restoration targets are key to restore degraded ecosystems and habitats, in particular, those with the most potential to capture and store carbon and to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters.

### Minimum area for nature

In line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the next CAP should be implemented in a manner that ensures at least 10% of agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features. Unfortunately, this percentage was not included under conditionality in the CAP post 2020, but other tools such as eco-schemes and agri-environmental schemes should be effectively deployed by Member States to ensure that this percentage is achieved.

### Justification

- High-diversity landscape features are key to reduce pesticide dependency and boost pollination thereby helping to build resilient functional biodiversity on farmland.
- Scientific evidence identifies the need 10% for nature on farms and landscape connectivity to support farmland biodiversity
- Boosting functional biodiversity like pollinators and predators of pests will help to ensure long-term fertility and productivity based on natural processes.

The above recommendations will contribute to the conservation of farmland biodiversity, enhance ecosystem services and preserve habitats and landscapes.





# FACE “GOLD” PATRONS

The 6<sup>th</sup> Report of the Biodiversity Manifesto has received a wide distribution in the hunting community by the FACE “Gold” Patrons: BioAmmo, Blaser, Jagd&Hund and Hunter&Co.

In 2020, FACE launched its new "Patron Programme", with the aim of providing the hunting sector with a means to support a strong future for hunting and conservation in Europe.

The FACE Patron Programme is the foundation for developing an essential and positive network.



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