

# Conservation at the national level

## - Examples of ongoing work in Finland

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# Black-tailed Godwit & Curlew

- BtG (VU): still increasing both in numbers and distribution (250-280 breeding pairs);
- Still have just under 40% breeding within the Natura 2000 network, but increasingly birds are moving to agricultural areas as well;
- Main threats: nest destruction/chick mortality , abandonment of grassland management, predation, climate change (flooding);
- Curlew (NT): declining/stable (87,000 breeding pairs);
- Disappeared from the southwestern and southern parts of the country - *"Kun sä kuulet kuovin äänen, älä mene järven jäälle."*;
- Mainly breed in agricultural and seminatural grassland habitats;
- Main threats: nest destruction/chick mortality & predation (strong increase in parts).



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# Conservation measures for waders

- **Only species-specific measures for the BtG** (very small population in a concentrated area, large parts of which are protected);
- Management area has further increased in the Bothnian Bay core breeding area in Oulu region;
- All the **nests found in the core breeding area are marked** with signs on farmlands and coastal pastures - farmers informed = significant reduction of nest losses;
- There are **no Curlew-specific conservation measures** in Finland, but wider measures have benefitted Curlews and other waders;
- **Coastal areas:** management of breeding and staging habitats by grazing and mowing (inside and outside of SPA's) on a wide scale (LIFE project, agri-environment schemes etc.);
- Various research and monitoring projects ongoing.



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# HELMI Habitats Programme

- Launched in 2020 - key tool for halting biodiversity loss in Finland: **actions benefit hundreds of endangered species and most of the endangered habitats in our country** (EUR 42 million – 2020-2030);
- Led by ENV Ministry – joint project with Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, implemented by the administrative branches of both ministries, municipal authorities & stakeholders;
- Covers **wide range of habitats**: peatlands, aquatic bird habitats, wetlands and coastal areas, semi-natural grasslands, forest habitats and aquatic environments;
- Actions are carried out both within and outside protected areas (participation of landowners is voluntary);
- **Comprehensive view of habitats and the necessary restoration and management measures + stakeholder collaboration.** Focus on key areas and sites to maximise impact on biodiversity.



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# HELMI: Waterbird habitats & wetlands

- Most of the significant wetlands and waterbird habitats in Finland **are protected or are located on state-owned land**;
- Restoration measures include clearing, dredging, mowing, raising the water level, hunting small carnivores, removing invasive species and management fishing **aiming to achieve**:
  - **200** SPA:s and other valuable waterbird habitats in the conservation area network restored;
  - **500** wetland habitat sites for birds established and restored outside the conservation area network;
  - **100** restored sites managed after restoration and, where necessary, restoration measures repeated during the Helmi period;
  - Intensified hunting of non-native predators in some of the restored SPA sites started in **70** sites;
  - Network of protection and resting areas for birds supplemented through voluntary action models at **150** sites.



# SOTKA Programme

- Specific **complementary part of HELMI** run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2020-2023 - EUR 6.8 million);
- Focus on game species (particularly declining waterbird populations), but **measures benefit wide range of species**: building wetlands and a network of resting areas, restoring peatlands and catchments, and **removing small predators** (particularly non-native mink and raccoon dog);
- Highlight: particular focus on **cooperation with landowners to establish wetlands that improve breeding success** (implemented by the Finnish Wildlife Agency);
- Good model of a cost-efficient way to build and restore high-quality habitats for waterbirds also outside protected areas;
- For example, in former peat production sites there may be large areas that are suitable for waterbirds without slow permit procedures and expensive excavation operations.



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# Moving beyond protected areas

- Many farmland birds are declining, yet **agriculture areas remain largely outside of the scope of current conservation activities**;
- Participating in the EU LIFE Farmland Birds project – recommendations too late for this latest CAP cycle;
- Autumn 2022: Finnish Museum of Natural History will undertake a **modelling exercise to map out farmland bird hotspots** for key species in decline (including Curlew);
- Include **actions for farmland birds in key areas** in Strategic LIFE IP project, (pilot measures on individual farms, develop guidance, awareness-raising by agriculture authorities etc.);
- Feed into the **national commitments** FI is expected to make under the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Restoration Act;
- Longer term: be ready with a **holistic recommendation for the next CAP** developed together with the agriculture authorities.



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Also interested in exploring project ideas in the wintering areas!

# Thanks!



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