LIFE GREAT BUSTARD

Cross-border protection of the
Great Bustard in Central Europe
2016 - 2024

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The Great Bustard
© Franz Josef Kovacs



The Great Bustard,
one of the heaviest
flying birds in the whole world,
is an endangered species
in all parts of its range.

The Great Bustard
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Project description

Project title
Cross-border protection of the Great Bustard in Central Europe (LIFE NAT/AT/000834)

Acronym
LIFE Great Bustard

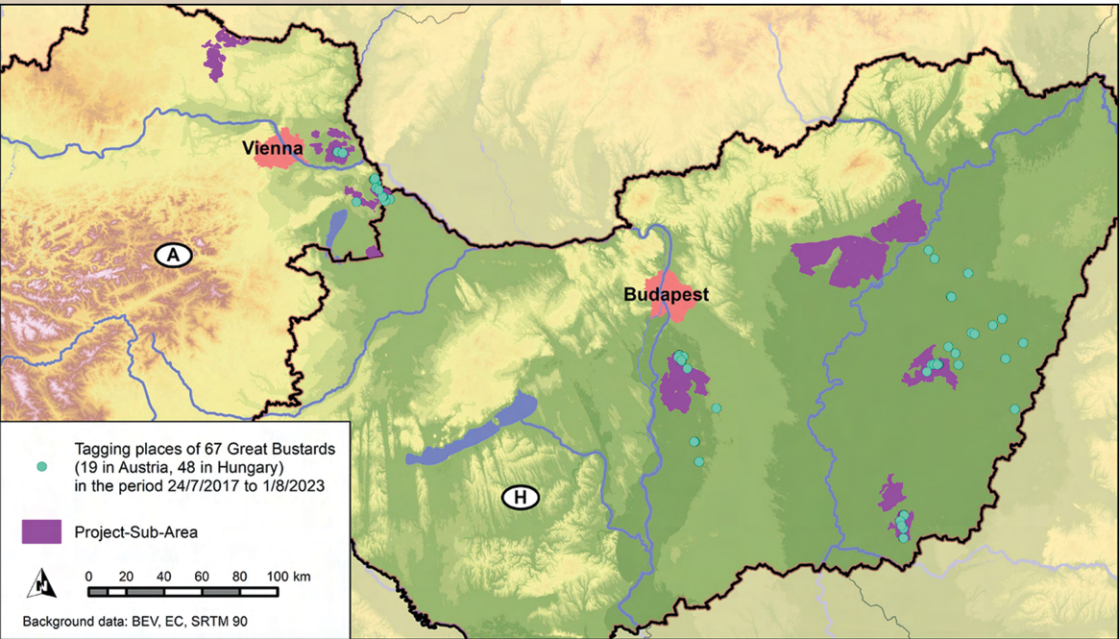
Beneficiaries and partners
The coordinating beneficiary is the Austrian Society for Great Bustard Conservation (ÖGG).
The project is implemented together with 9 project partners, 2 co-financiers and 1 cooperation partner.

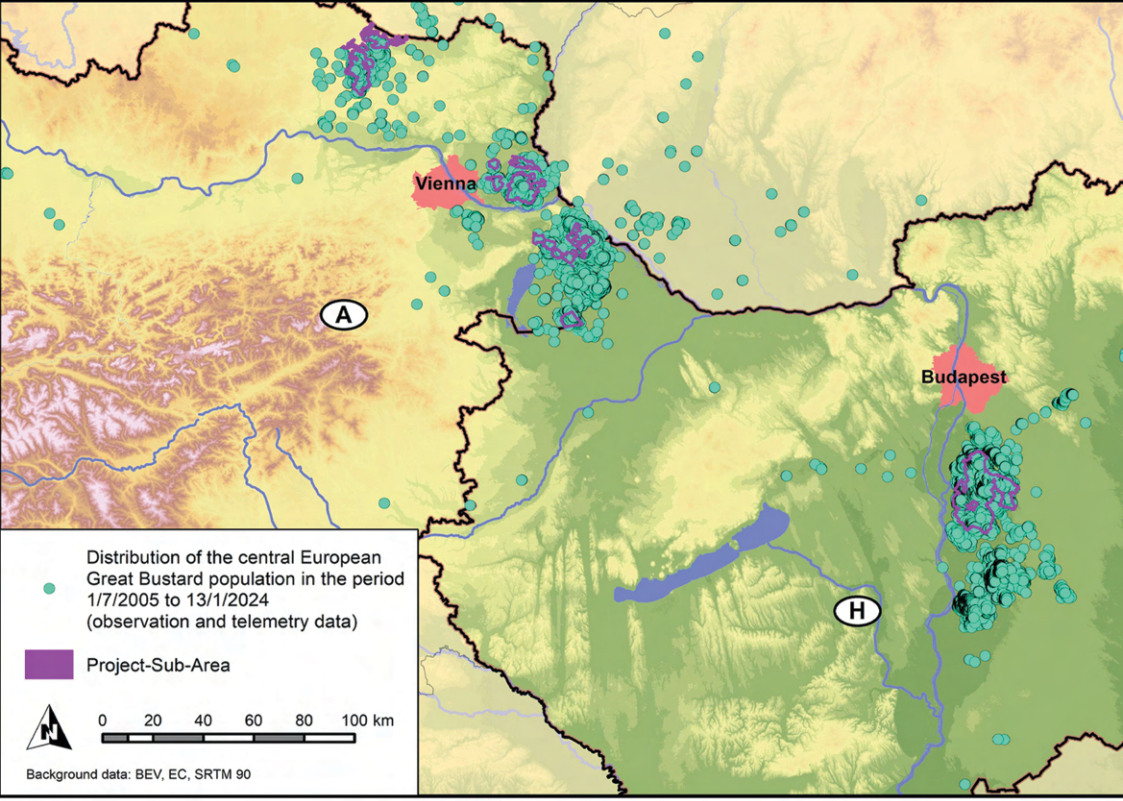
Project duration
11.07.2016 – 31.10.2024

Main project objectives

Austria (AT) and Hungary (HU) have been very active in Great Bustard conservation for several years. After two Austrian LIFE and LIFE+ projects and one LIFE project in Hungary now both EU-countries are implementing together a huge cross-border protection project for Great Bustards in Central Europe. Based on the positive effects of the former measures taken, the objectives of this LIFE project are to ***continue intensive habitat management efforts***, to ***reduce the threat of collision with power lines*** - for many years the no. 1 mortality factor for immature and adult Great Bustards - and to ***reduce predation***.

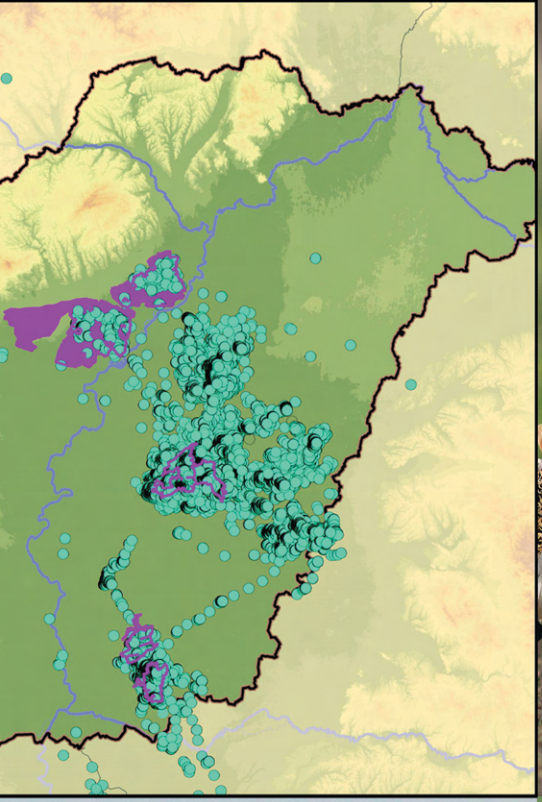
The LIFE project aims to support and maximise the ***effectiveness of the cross-border protection*** in Austria and Hungary through coordination of conservation measures and optimal communication.





Not only the world population but also the population of Europe has declined by more than 30 % in 11 years.

However, thanks to conservation efforts like habitat management, reduction of the risk of collision with power lines and cooperation with farmers and hunters, the Great Bustard populations in Austria and Hungary ***increased***.





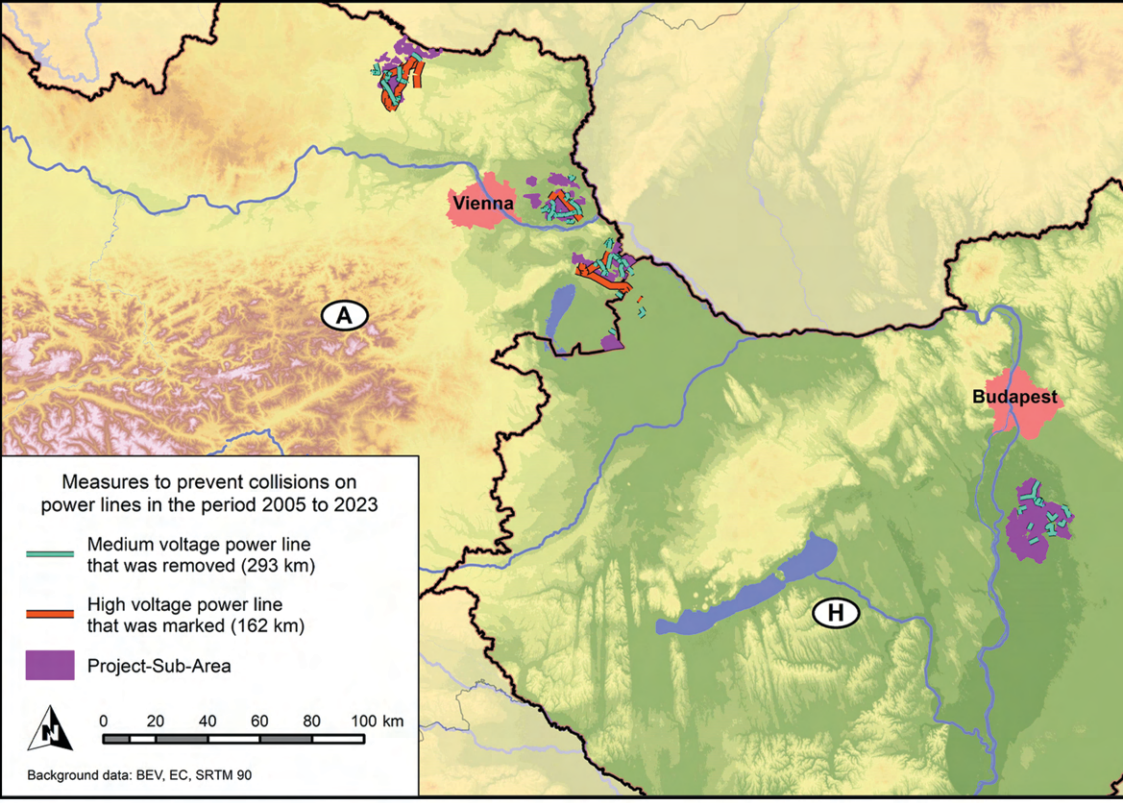
Fighting males of Great Bustard
© Franz Josef Kovacs



Flying Great Bustards in front of a power line
© MME

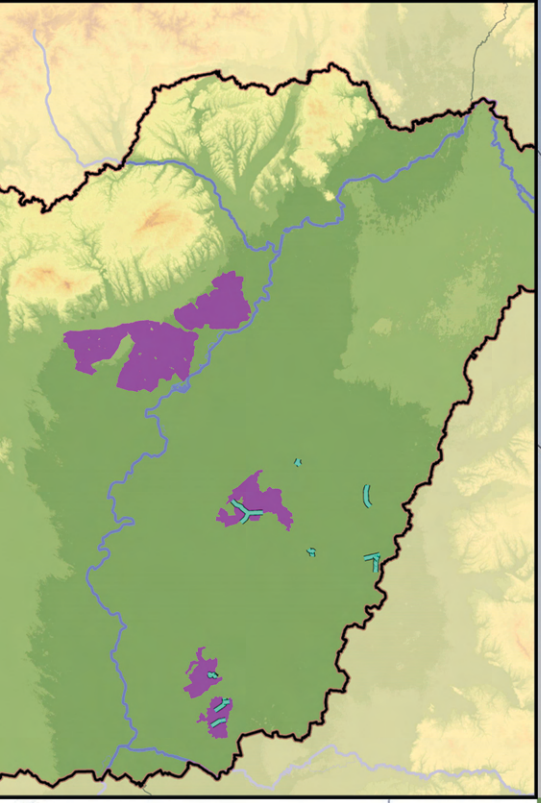
The West Pannonian Great Bustard population has been *significantly increasing for nearly two decades*.*

*from 286 individuals in 2005 to 662 in 2023.



In Burgenland and Lower Austria in the last 20 years approx. 150 km of medium voltage power lines were first ***placed into the ground*** and then the overhead power lines and pylons were ***removed***.

Furthermore high voltage power lines ***were marked*** to improve their visibility.





Marking of high voltage power lines in Austria
© TB Raab GmbH



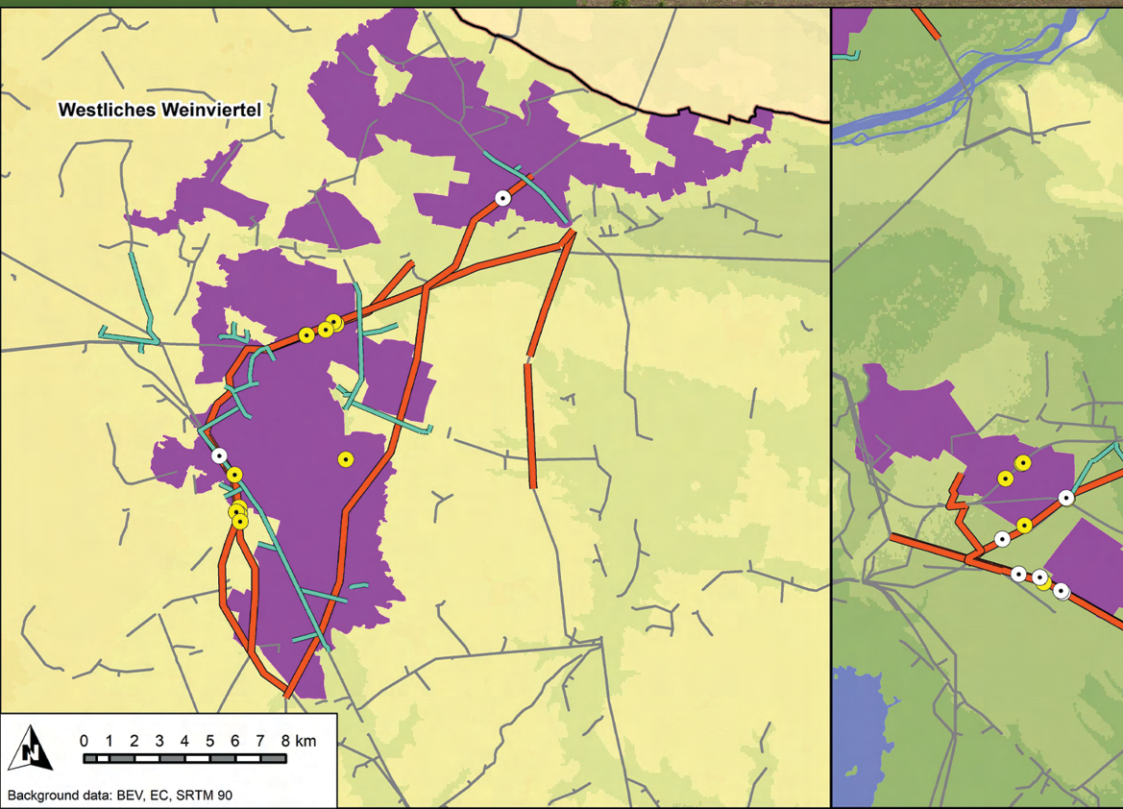
Underground cabling of power lines in Austria
© TB Raab GmbH

Reduction of the risk of collision with power lines by *marking and underground cabling.*

Marking of power lines and underground cabling are the *most effective* measures to protect the Great Bustards.

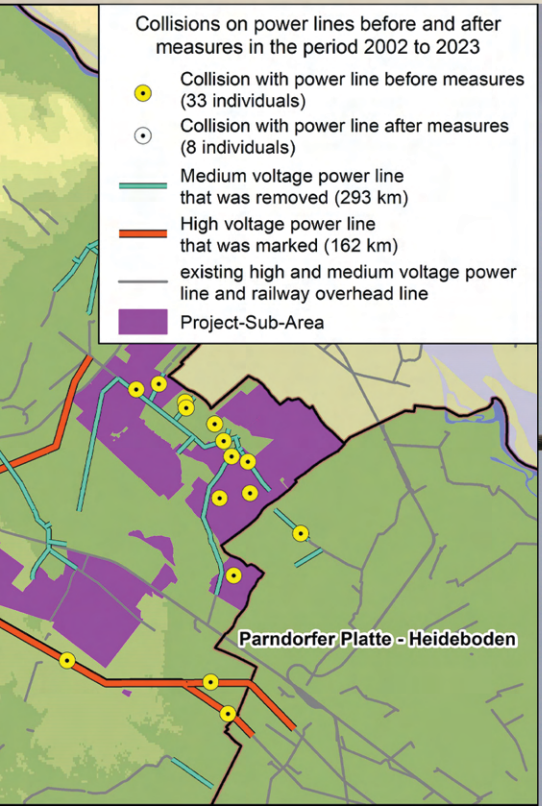


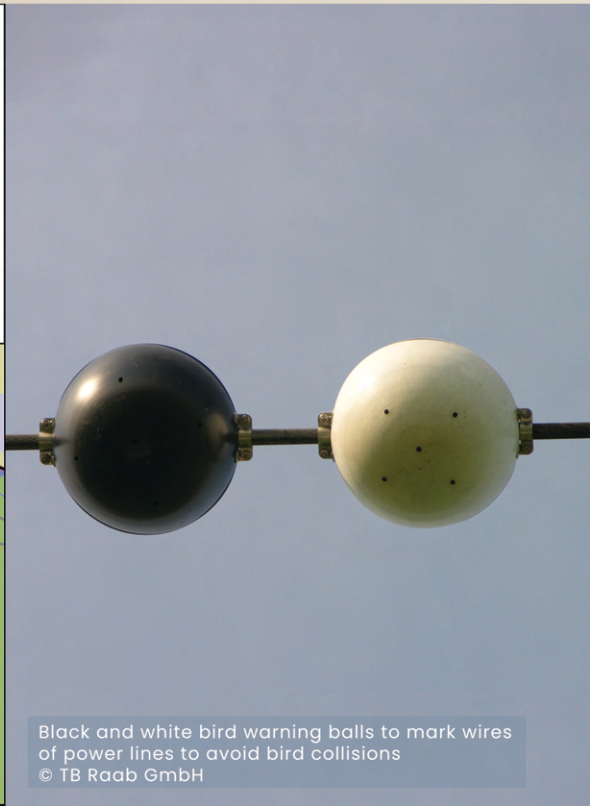
Marked high voltage power lines in Austria
© TB Raab GmbH



Before measures were taken within the different LIFE projects, 33 individuals died due to collision with power lines in the area of Westliches Weinviertel and Parndorfer Platte - Heideboden. After measures were taken, only 8 individuals died due to collision with marked power lines in these two areas.

Even though some distribution areas of the Great Bustards are safe now, there are still habitats where ***measures need to be taken.***





Black and white bird warning balls to mark wires of power lines to avoid bird collisions
© TB Raab GmbH

The collaboration between farmers, hunters and local politicians in the frame of the LIFE Great Bustard project was essential *to create suitable breeding sites and protect them against disturbance.*



Farmers ensured the access to rape fields for the Great Bustards in winter
© Franz Josef Kovacs



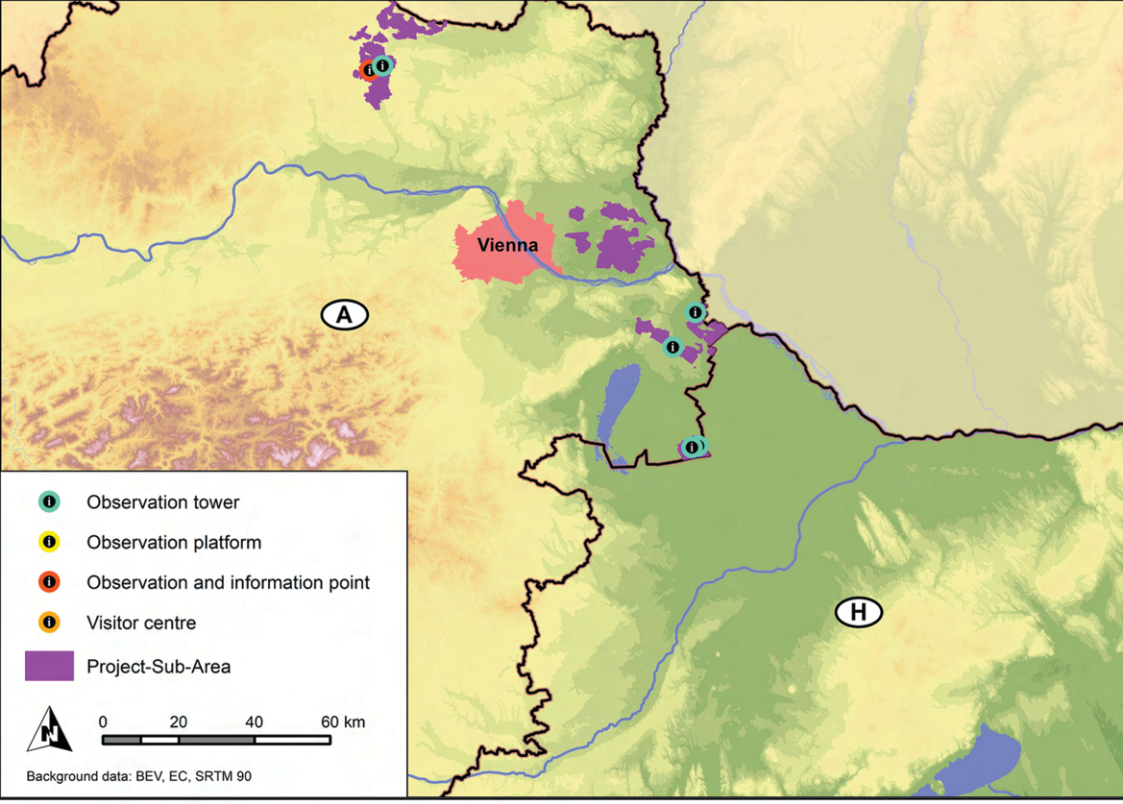
Special cultivated Great Bustard fallow which provides insects for the Great Bustard chicks
© Franz Josef Kovacs

Farmers made use of the Austrian agri-environmental scheme "ŐPUL" by cultivating special fields and also ensured the access to food supply in winter.

Farmers and hunters were helping ***to keep disturbance*** in the Great Bustard areas ***as low as possible*** and were also ***involved in the successful monitoring*** of the Great Bustard conservation actions.

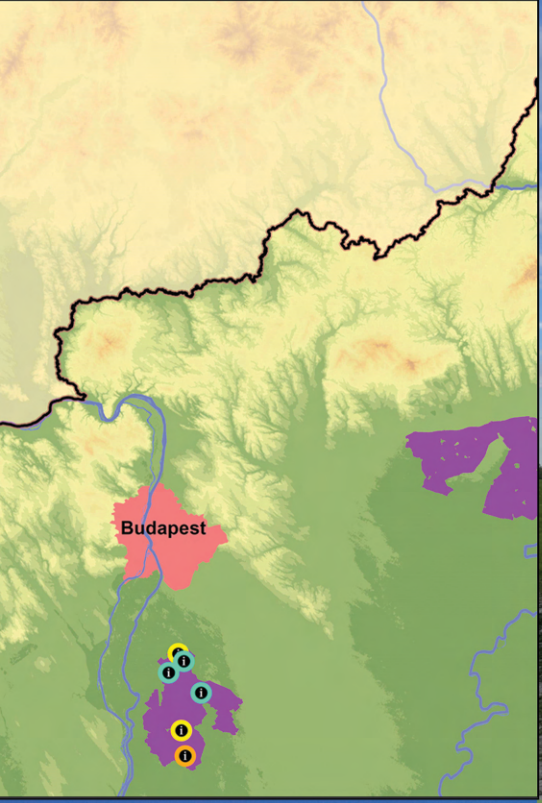


Farmers keep disturbances as low as possible
© Franz Josef Kovacs



Raising awareness is an important tool in terms of the conservation of endangered species like the Great Bustard.

Within the LIFE project for the protection of the Great Bustard ***information and observation points*** were build during the last years. They are used by ***thousands of visitors*** every year who can enjoy the sight of Great Bustard flocks as the result of the successful LIFE projects.





LIFE Great Bustard observation tower in Hungary
based on old power line pylons
© TB Raab GmbH



LIFE Great Bustard observation tower in Austria
© TB Raab GmbH

Explore the beauty of Great Bustards *yourself.*



Signing of the Declaration by representatives of Austria (Mr. Peter Iwaniewicz) Slovakia (Mrs. Katarína Butkovská) and Hungary (Mr. Bertalan Balczó)
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The conservation will be *continued on* European level.

The Declaration on the long-term conservation of the Great Bustard in the tri-border region of Hungary, Austria and Slovakia and its surroundings was signed in September 2023 by the representatives of these three countries.

By this act they committed together to protect and improve natural conditions of the Great Bustard habitats and to continue monitoring and research for the benefit of the population, and last but not least, to cooperate with each other by sharing information on the current support provided to farmers under the EU Common Agricultural Policy.

Furthermore, the goal is to implement a Europe-wide project for the conservation of the Great Bustard.

This project is co-financed by the *LIFE No*

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect thos

Coordinating beneficiary

ÖSTERREICHISCHE GESELLSCHAFT GROSSTRAPPENSCHUTZ (ÖGG)

The TB Raab GmbH was commissioned to implement the LIFE Great Bustard project.

TB Raab
Technisches Büro für Biologie

Project partners (Associated beneficiaries)

naturschutz niederösterreich

NATURSCHUTZ BURGENLAND

NÖ Netz EVN Gruppe

Kiskunsági Nemzeti Park

netz BURGENLAND

BÜKKI NEMZETI PARK

Körös-Maros Nemzeti Park

elmű hálózat

MME

Co-financiers and cooperation partner

Bundesministerium
Klimaschutz, Umwelt,
Energie, Mobilität,
Innovation und Technologie

AGRÁRMINISZTÉRIUM

APG

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