



**LIFE+ Nature Project  
“Cross-border Protection of  
the Great Bustard  
in Austria –  
continuation“  
2010 - 2015**

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



# LIFE+ Project Great Bustard



Project beneficiary:

Austrian Society for Great Bustard Conservation (ÖGG)

Project partners:

Government of Lower Austria, Nature Protection

Provincial Government of Burgenland, Conservation Department

Netz Niederösterreich GmbH

Netz Burgenland Strom GmbH

APG - Austrian Power Grid AG

Nationalparkgesellschaft Neusiedler See-  
Seewinkel

Co-financiers:

Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture,

Forestry, Environment and Water Management

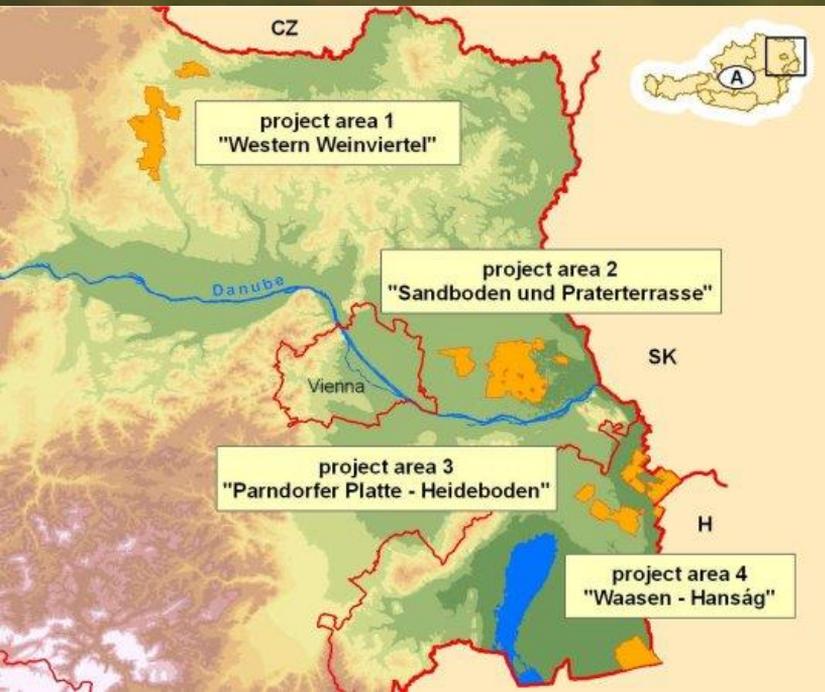


Project number:

LIFE09 NAT/AT/000225

Project duration:

01.10.2010 - 31.12.2015



The four project areas in Austria.



# Objectives of the LIFE+ Project



A male Great Bustard is flying towards a 20 kV-power line, which was transferred into the ground in the course of the first LIFE Project from 2005 to 2010, as well as several other Medium power voltage lines, and is therefore no longer a risk for flying bustards. The main objective of this LIFE+ Project was, to further decrease the threat of collisions with power lines, the most important mortality factor in Austria for adult Great Bustards.

After the successful implementation of the first LIFE Project to protect the Great Bustard in Austria from 2005 to 2010 the main objective of this LIFE+ Project was to further decrease the threat of collisions with power lines, the most important mortality factor in Austria for adult Great Bustards. This leads to a long-term increase of not only the Austrian, but of the entire cross-border West-Pannonian Great Bustard population. In the project period of the LIFE+ Project 2010 to 2015 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

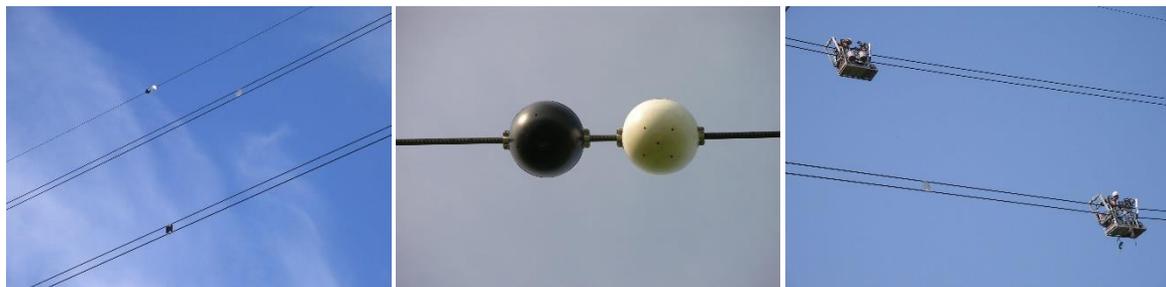


The transfer into the ground and the subsequent removal of a medium voltage power line in the project area Parndorfer Platte-Heideboden.

In Burgenland and Lower Austria in the last 11 years altogether ca. 100 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 two LIFE projects "Great Bustard". 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.



High voltage power lines marked with bird warning balls and bird warning plates in the project area Parndorfer Platte, respectively and the marking of a high voltage power line.



# Implemented actions



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





# Implemented actions



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

Within the two LIFE Projects around 150 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 doubled from the breeding period 2005 (ca. 150 individuals) to 2015 (ca. 310 individuals). 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-environmental 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 in the course of the two Projects of the Great Bustard in Austria.



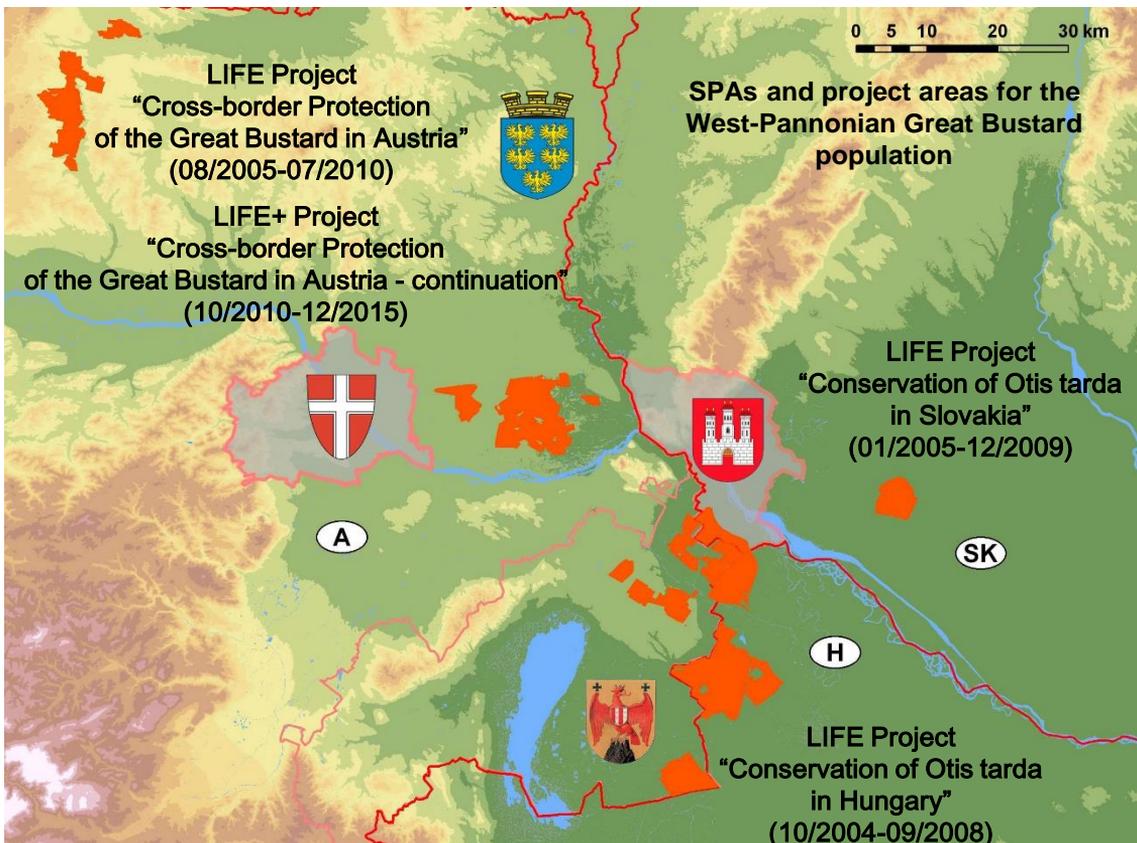
More than 100 events especially for farmers and hunters, but also for pupils including presentations followed by excursions.



From 2005 to 2015 an information- and observation point at the Wartberger Kirche in Straning-Grafenberg as well as 4 observation towers in Andau, Pama, Roseldorf and Zurndorf were built for the observation of the Great Bustard, which are still used every year by several thousand visitors and therefore are a visible long-term sign of the two LIFE Projects for the protection of the Great Bustards.



# The conservation will be continued!



The aim of the LIFE+ Project was 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 took 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 was continued within the Austrian LIFE+ Project. The good cooperation to protect the entire cross-border West-Pannonian population of the Great Bustard will be continued in the next years in the course of a new LIFE Project.

## Imprint

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Text & map preparation:  
Technisches Büro für Biologie Mag. Dr. Rainer Raab

Background data: BEV, Land NÖ, Land BGLD

Print: December 2015 500 copies in total

For further information and results of the LIFE+ Project  
see [www.grosstrappe.at](http://www.grosstrappe.at), where this brochure can also be downloaded  
as pdf in German and English.

The preparation of this brochure and the whole project were financed by the European  
Union to 75 % with resources of the LIFE Nature Fund.



The LIFE Project LIFE09 NAT/AT/000225 is supported by the EU and the  
following project partners and co-financiers:



**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.

