

# WILDLIFE ESTATES LABEL

*WE act for biodiversity*



## 11<sup>th</sup> WE Plenary Session: An exclamation mark for private nature conservation



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On the 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September international experts for wildlife management and the national delegations gathered in Køge, Denmark for the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the WE Label Steering Committee to discuss progress in the project, exchange experiences and validate the new WE Estates in various countries. The Steering Committee, acting as an International Jury, awarded the label for 26 more Estates, increasing the total number of estates under the label to 231 and covering a total area of 1.135.000 hectares.

The seminar “Managing Europe’s wildlife and its natural environment” which followed the Steering Committee meeting, provided the floor for fruitful discussions between various stakeholders of wildlife and nature conservation management. **Humberto Delgado Rosa**, Director for Natural Capital in DG

Environment, European Commission, referred to private land managers and stated that they deserve a full recognition of their role in nature conservation. **Andras Krolopp**, Senior Policy Advisor of The Nature Conservancy, presented the US model of conservation which offers tax reliefs for landowners who accept restrictions on their land and allows them to sell the accrued loss of value of their land to NGOs as The Nature Conservancy. **Jurgen Tack**, ELO Scientific Director & Landelijk Vlaanderen reported on the scientific evidence that hunting contributes to conservation through balancing the peaks and slumps of population from prey and predators.

Participants in the Plenary Session were invited to visit the Ledreborg and Gissfeld Wildlife Estates and see their wildlife- and landscape management.



© ELO Ledreborg: <http://www.ledreborg.dk/en/>

Ledreborg is an estate of 1.600 hectares in the centre of Zealand's only National Park. It was listed under a national landscape preservation order in the 1970's and has a long tradition as a sporting estate where game and wildlife management is an essential part of the estate's nature conservation.



© ELO Gissselfeld: <http://www.gissselfeld-kloster.dk/>

The Gissselfeld Estate consists of 4.000 hectares distributed between forest, agriculture, meadows, lakes, and wetlands. Optimal conditions are ensured for game and nature thanks to artificially created biotopes, hedgerows and game crops. Grass strips and beetle banks were cultivated to extend habitats for pollinators. The agricultural business is run in harmony with the further activities in the estate, such as renting of houses, fishing, hunting, tourism, and events.

## WE in the Netherlands: Information meeting at De Hoge Veluwe National Park

25<sup>th</sup> November 2016

In the Netherlands, the long run-up to the new Nature Conservation Act meant that there was little attention for and interest in the Wildlife Estates Label. With the Act taking effect on 1 January 2017 it was time to promote the WE Label in the Netherlands, where biodiversity is a constant concern for the country's estate owners. Biodiversity is under pressure, and estate owners are becoming an increasingly important resource in the protection of nature and landscape. Estate management is also affected by European policy, including *Natura 2000* and the national legislation that has followed it. To improve the support given to estate owners, the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) and Friends of the Countryside (FCS) have developed the Wildlife Estates Label ([www.wildlife-estates.eu](http://www.wildlife-estates.eu)).

Stakeholders for biodiversity gathered at De Hoge Veluwe National Park for an information meeting about the WE Label. The speakers were **Konstantin Kostopoulos**, COO of Wildlife Estates, **Bob van den Brink**, member of the Netherlands Wildlife Estates Evaluation Committee, **Teun van Es**, member of the Netherlands Wildlife Estates Delegation, and **Seeger van Voorst tot Voorst**, member of the Wildlife Estates Steering Committee and of the Netherlands Wildlife Estates Delegation. The invited attendees were the private owners of estates having an area of at least 500 hectares.

Mr Kostopoulos recalled that the principal objectives of this label are:

**Practical:** to recognize, promote and support good estate management within the European Union.

**Communicative:** to promote communications with public and politicians on sustainable estate management (nature conservation, land use, hunting and fishing).

**Political:** to give estate owners the opportunity to influence and shape the implementation of national and EU policy (including *Natura 2000*, the EU biodiversity strategy, and countryside development policy) through effective lobby activities.

**Networking:** to form a European network in order to create synergies, exchange experiences, and provide opportunities to build relationships with fellow estate holders.

As regards progress in the WE project, the speaker presented figures showing that it now includes 231 estates in 19 European countries covering almost 1.2 million hectares. He also mentioned that on the basis of the rate of growth (in hectares) coming under the label experienced in recent years and because of the extension in eastern European countries it is expected that the benchmark of 3 million hectares will be attained in 3-5 years.

There are currently just two WE labels in the Netherlands, and in the years to come we will be working to increase this number.



De Hogue Veluwe National Park: © Hans Drijer

## Managing Nature – Working together Stakeholders for biodiversity meet in Finland

29<sup>th</sup> November 2016

Nowadays most of our environment is man-made. In addition to cultural values, these habitats are often hotspots for biodiversity. Management of these habitats is in our hands.

”We are responsible for sustainable food production and sustainable management in general also in the future. This is how we want to work”, says Dr. **Heli Siitari**, the Executive of Nature and Game Management Trust Finland. Ms. Siitari is also the President of the Policy and Law division of the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, CIC. Ms. Siitari acted as the chairman in the first day of the two-day seminar ”Managing Nature – Working Together” held in Finland on the 29th – 30th of November 2016.

”The goal is to strengthen the will to work together. We wanted to bring up a lot of good examples from all over Finland and also from other European countries. A lot has been done and it’s important to share the experiences. We wanted to strengthen the co-operation between hunters, landowners, nature conservationists, food producers, NGO’s, decision makers and people living in the cities and countryside as well”, Project Director **Eija Hagelberg** from the Baltic Sea Action Group pointed out. Hagelberg was the chairman of the organizing team of the seminar.

Participants to the seminar were various stakeholder groups which, during the tow-day sessions, created effective ways of how to work together. Ideas of how to protect biodiversity were developed and lots of new

contacts were made. Many participants found new partners with whom to promote nature management.

Mr. **Florian Hofbauer** from the European Landowners Organization, ELO, started the seminar with presenting the perspective on private wildlife management and biodiversity conservation, and underlined that Wildlife is not limited within state borders. Co-operation therefore is vital between countries.

The seminar dealt with many projects in different European countries. **Mr Razvan Popa** talked about nature management in the countryside of Romania. Ms. **Concha Salguero** referred to Spanish pastoralism. She talked about difficulties and opportunities of working voluntarily in the area. Mr. **Ross Macleod**, Wildlife Estates Scotland, presented the Scottish way of managing game and wildlife by bringing up good examples.



Wildlife Estate "Alhainen": © Hia Sjöblom

Mr. **Mikko Alhainen**, Finnish Wildlife Agency, who just received the WE-label this year for his own farm, talked about how to succeed in wetland and wildlife habitat restoration and management by working together with hunters and landowners. Conservation Adviser **Christopher Tomson** (The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) explained how a collaboration with farmers can be beneficial for both the birds and the farmers. He gave

examples of the work already done in Yorkshire farmlands.



Wildlife Estate "Åminne Gods": © Hia Sjöblom

The Finnish speakers brought up many good examples of wildlife management from different parts of Finland. Mr. **Ahti Putaala** talked about restorations of wetland areas for willow grouse. Farmer **Antti Toivonen** from Salmensuu farm reported about his livestock production on the seaside of the nearby town Turku: "The grazing cattle brings nature closer to urban people and at the same time it keeps the seashore clean and open." The seminar got glimpses of the problems in the Finnish Archipelago, when Mr. **Tommy Arfman** showed how the increasing population of raccoon dogs negatively affects the numbers of nesting waterfowl. Among the examples of co-operation favoring nature, wildlife and biodiversity Mr. **Juhani Toivakka** pointed out how a whole village in the northwestern Finland is working together "Everybody in Kainasto-village doesn't like hunting, but they welcome people coming and using local services", he said.

The seminar was two days of interesting talks and active network-building. It was like a factory making new ideas come true. Dr. Heli Siitari was also very happy that the knowledge of the European Wildlife Estates Label was spreading out efficiently.

# Belleuropa Award Winner 2016: Land- und Forstbetrieb Rixdorf



Picture: Karl-Heinz Florenz (right), Member of the European Parliament and Francesco Natta (left), sponsor of the Belleuropa Award present the Award to Matthias Graf von Westphalen, owner of Land- und Forstbetrieb Rixdorf

The Belleuropa Award honours a Wildlife Estate Label territory that has realized an important step forward to maintain, protect or improve land for the benefit of biodiversity, using agri-environmental measures and achieving significant results from an environmental point of view.

The winner of this year is the agricultural and silvicultural enterprise Rixdorf located in Ostholsteinische Schweiz in Schleswig-Holstein, north of Hamburg. The landscape is dominated by flat hills and post-glacial lakes. Mixed deciduous forests dominate the silvicultural area, and heavy, partly loamy soils dominate the agricultural area of this estate. In addition, grasslands, swamp forests and wetlands (natural ponds and water systems), which are not or only slightly used, connect the areas with each other. Newly developed habitats or

the expansion of the existing ones continually increase this important part of functioning ecosystems.

The company Rixdorf has set itself the goal to reconcile the management of agricultural and forestry land with the interests of environment and nature conservation through careful and considerate utilisation of the natural resources and the simultaneous fulfilment of the requirements of various purposes, such as economy, environmental protection and tourism. Certain valuable areas such as swamp- and wastelands, horst trees and their environment are left completely or temporally uncultivated.

The management of the estate, including hunting and fishery, has always been in harmony with the conservation and preservation of game and fish stocks and other flora and fauna. Thus, rare species of animals and plants can maintain or expand their population, while other protected species were able to resettle (sea eagle, crane, black woodpecker, otter, etc.). Some larger areas in Rixdorf are part of the Natura 2000 network. Ecotourism is organised in such a way that unnecessary disturbances to sensitive animal species are avoided and the natural experience is preserved. The listed farmyard with a total of 1.5 hectares of thatched roofed buildings is often the starting point of guided excursions. The guests have the opportunity to get to know the natural diversity of Rixdorf's agriculture and forestry. Internships and training positions provide experience for the young generation of future land managers.

