

## SLOVAKIA

### National Report on Implementation of the MoU

#### 1. Habitat protection

##### **1.1 Designation of protected areas**

Currently there is the last breeding and strutting ground located to the south of Bratislava near the town of Rusovce. This locality is situated in the orographic unit of Podunajská rovina, near the borders with Hungary and Austria. The area of this site is 1 773 ha and it was included into the list of proposed Special Protection Areas called Sysľovské polia.

##### **1.2 Measures taken to ensure the maintenance of Great Bustard habitats outside of protected areas**

For the purpose of setting up of conditions to protect Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) and eliminate the influence of the agriculture on it there was rented the territory which area is 75 ha. This territory is situated within the proposed Special Protected Area of Sysľovské polia and it is fallow area with gradual restitution of the original plant and insect species. Some measures were taken to ensure the maintenance of Great Bustard habitats as regular mowing (once – twice a year) and prohibition of aerial spraying of chemicals and fertilizers. The territory and the population are permanent controlled and monitored.

##### **1.3 Measures taken to avoid fragmentation of Great Bustard habitats**

The most of technical projects which cause the fragmentation of habitats or have important barrier effect must be included into the process of environmental impact assessment (under the Act on EIA).

There are several wind farms located on the Austrian side close to the Great Bustard habitat. All these wind turbines are built on the major migration route of birds (which leads along the Danube and Morava rivers) and have negative influence not only on Great Bustard but also on thousand migrating bird species such as wild geese, strokes, herons and others and bats.

The motorway D2 and the aerial electricity transmission lines which intersect the territory caused the extinction of the part of the population of Great Buster in Slovakia. There were not built any technical constructions which would cause the fragmentation of the Great Bustard habitats after the ratification of the MoU.

#### 2. Prevention of hunting, disturbance and other threats

##### **2.1 Hunting**

In accordance with regulations in force Great Bustard is out of hunting year-round. Hunting endangered Great Bustard indirectly in the time of roebuck hunting season. In this time hens are disturbed during the incubation of eggs.

##### **2.2 Prevention of disturbance**

Taken management measures mentioned in part 1.2 lead to the prevention of disturbance of the population of Great Bustard

### **2.3 Prevention of predation**

Significant predator species are fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), crow (*Corvus corone*), pine marten (*Martes martes*) and dogs. The pressure of predators have been eliminated by capturing. The effectiveness of these measures is about 30%.

### **2.4 Adoption of measures for power lines**

The only measure which have been taken to reduce the mortality caused by existing power lines are visual warning and acoustic signs placed on power lines. On the base of current observations this measure seems to be ineffective.

### **2.5 Compensatory measures**

There is no the Great Bustard habitat loss or degradation since signing of MoU. At Present there is the last breeding ground in the proposed Special Protected Area of Sysľovské polia. It is situated on the northern border of its occurrence.

## **3. Possession and trade**

Considering the small number of breeding birds the possession of and trade - in the birds and their eggs is irrelevant. Injured or ill birds have not been found recently.

## **4. Recovery measures**

### **4.1 Captive breeding in emergency situations**

The captive breeding does not play any role in Great Bustard conservation in our country. We do not breed any Great Bustard in the capture.

### **4.2 Reintroduction**

There have not been taken any measures to reintroduce Great Bustard in Slovakia. Considering the absence of the capture breeding the reintroduction of Great Bustard is irrelevant.

### **4.3 Monitoring of the success of release programmes**

The release programmes of capture bred birds have not been realized because of the reasons mentioned in the points 4.1 and 4.2.

## **5. Cross-border conservation measures**

We collaborate with neighbouring countries on national surveys different researches and making the management measures for the Great Bustard conservation. Every year we have several meetings with our colleagues from Hungary and Austria where we prepare mutual management programmes aimed to gradual revitalization of the chosen Great Bustard habitats.

## **6. Monitoring an research**

### **6.1 Monitoring of population size and population trends**

10% of the Central European and 100% of the national population of Great Bustard and more than 1% OF Central European of geese (*Anser sp.*) have wintering grounds in Sysľovské polia

area. The area is an important wintering ground for the other birds of prey species (*Buteo buteo*, *Buteo lagopus*, *Falco peregrinus*, *Falco cherrug*, *Aquila heliaca*, *Circus cyaneus*, *Haliaeetus albicilla*, *Accipiter nisus*), an important historical reproduction site, and the last regular breeding ground of Great Bustard (10 breeding hens) and Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) (20 pairs). Breeding of the other rare species, mostly Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) and Montague's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) was noted at the site. The regular wintering of relatively high number (about 160 Great Bustards) refers the importance of the area.

Trends: population – 2, areal – 1

Ecosozological Status 1995: E, 1998: CR: A1, B2 acd, D

## **6.2 Monitoring of the effects of habitat management**

The conservation habitat assessment has been monitored since 2001. Existing observations shows very close relation between the population of Great Bustard and its habitat conservation.

## **6.3 Comparative ecological studies**

No comparative studies on the population dynamics, habitat requirements, effects of the habitat changes and causes of decline have been carried out in our country in collaboration with other range states.

## **6.4 Promotion of studies on mortality factors**

The most important mortality factor seems to be electrocution posed to Great Bustard from transmission lines. Some unofficial announcements of illegal shooting were recorded.

## **6.5 Investigation of factors limiting breeding success**

The factors limiting breeding success, the use of habitat and home range are more or less known from our own monitoring or from the information from our colleagues from the other Range States. We recognize the purchase of the key sites as the main condition of Great Bustard protection and survival in Slovakia.

## **6.6 Studies on migration**

During the last years we focused to the Great Bustard population in the proposed Special Protected Area of Sysľovské polia. We have gained relatively exact information on the number of wintering and breeding individuals. The origin of the wintering individuals is known from the information exchange with our Hungarian and Austrian colleagues. They are the autochthonous species mostly breeding in Hungary and Austria which are concentrated into 1 – 3 flocks wintering not far from the Slovak-Hungarian border. Great Bustard ringing is not carried out yet.

## **7. Training of staff working in conservation bodies**

With regard to small number of Great Bustard in Slovakia the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic – the Regional Office for Nature and Landscape Conservation deals with the Great Bustard protection. The next information on Great Bustard and management measures etc. are obtained from different workshops, conferences and collaboration with foreign colleagues.

## **8. Increasing awareness of the need to protect Great Bustard and their habitat**

In order to achieve better public awareness of the need to protect Great Bustard and its habitats the priority is to promote the Great Bustard conservation through the education and communication. We have organized several programmes in TV and radio and informed some press mediums to motivate people to appreciate the values of such a rare bird species as the Great Bustard is. We have published a brochure about the present state of the Great Bustard conservation in Slovakia and spread it among all the stakeholders. All about mentioned activities have had a positive influence on the agricultural owners at the Great Bustard habitats and increased their willingness to collaborate in proposed management activities.

## **9. Economic measures**

No initiative has been taken to develop economic activities that are in line with the conservation requirements of Great Bustard in Slovakia. All development conditions will be included into the prepared Management plan on proposed Special Protected Area of Sysľovské polia.

## **10. Threats**

The main threats are:

- agricultural use of the land that is in contradiction with biological, habitat and food requirements of Great Bustard
- lack of suitable biotopes
- disturbance
- lack of financial resources to ensure species preservation
- building-up of barrier constructions