

THE ART OF COMMUNICATION ON NATURE MANAGEMENT MEASURES



INTRODUCTION

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR: EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE FROM (LIFE)
PROJECT WORK AND BEYOND

Online Meeting | 24-25.02.2021

Heidrun Fammler, Baltic Environmental Forum Germany



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Introduction to the seminar

Heidrun Fammler, Baltic Environmental Forum Germany

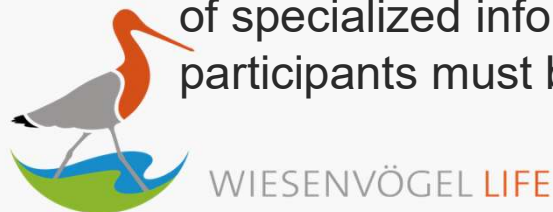


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Why to talk about communication in nature management? (1)



- Nature conservation is perceived as positive by most people
- yet the implementation of nature conservation goals sometimes leads to conflicts
- The players involved interfere with each other, often have different economically or socially oriented goals
- Resistance and acceptance can occur, willingness to act can change dynamically based on the perceptions of individuals and groups.
- Perceptions of any situation are as individual as the people perceiving it, and are largely determined by cultural and emotional factors
- In nature conservation work, the realization has been growing for only a few years that communication does not represent the exclusive transmission of specialized information, but that the socio-economic factors of all participants must be taken into account

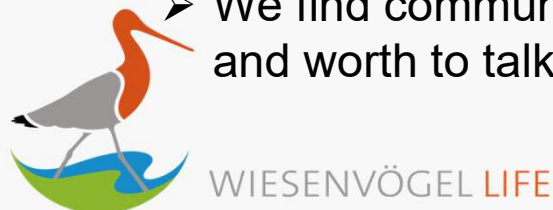


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Why to talk about communication in nature management? (2)



- This requires transparent and appreciative communication, which addresses cultural and emotional aspects:
 - It is important to know the **needs of the target groups**, and to actively respond to these needs
 - The **style of communication** must be an honest mix of information and addressing the needs of the target groups
 - The communicator must have specialist **knowledge on nature conservation AND possess skills in communication**, cooperation and building consensus
 - Besides biologists and nature conservation experts more communication experts, sociologists, psychologists and PR-skilled persons are getting involved – must getting involved
 - We find communication on nature conservation measures is a “piece of art” – and worth to talk intensively about it.



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The LIFE programme and communication



- Although LIFE requires communication and dissemination measures, the requirements for these measures and the instructions for applicants are far from modern communication goals or “art of communication”
- In contrast to other strands of the LIFE program, there is no mandatory evaluation of the impact of the project measures on the local economy, various interest groups, or local residents – indicators proposed are ‘number of participants in events’ and ‘website visitors’
- The LIFE Nature Conservation Program is relatively conservative in its communication ambitions; modernization would be advisable in any case, as many projects are making progress in this respect
- Since 1992, the LIFE programme has financed over 4000 projects throughout Europe with a budget of over 3.4 billion € in 2014-2020. We expect for 2021-27 even 2 billion more, 55% for nature conservation
- LIFE GIE – governance and information – has a negligible share – annually 10-15 projects out of 200 selected and very small budgets.
- From 2021 GIE is ceased, incorporated into the topical priorities
- This means that communication will become even less in focus



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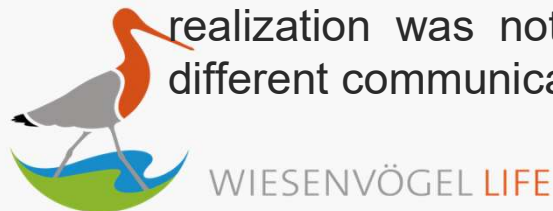
With this event and our guide we want to point out its importance!

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LIFE Meadow Birds and communication



- The LIFE Meadow birds project started in 2011 - 10 years and a budget of €22.3 million – a key message being circulated in the press.
- PM Heinrich Belting presented the project always with these words: "The LIFE Meadow Bird Project wants everything that farmers do not like: rewetting of the meadows, late mowing, bush clearance and land purchase." So, from the beginning, the cards were laid on the table.
- A large number of round tables, in which bird protection measures and breeding successes were reported on a local level and endless individual discussions with many landowners to negotiate land purchases or leases led to an optimized network of protected areas in Lower Saxony, with better habitats and breeding conditions for meadow birds.
- Other project measures, such as the containment of predators (feral domestic cats and hedgehogs) in meadow bird breeding areas are a sensitive issue in the public opinion. Their realization was not smooth in some places and would certainly have benefited from more or different communication methods.

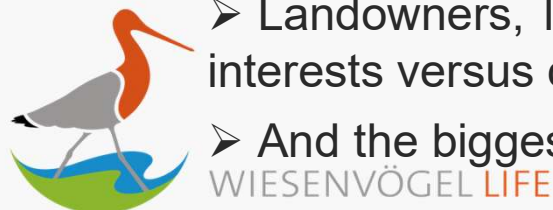


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From LIFE Meadow Birds to this seminar



- The LIFE Meadow Bird team wanted a manual or guide on how to better do communication - something “handy” and not much text!
- We started to look around to other (LIFE) projects and asked them (YOU!) about their communication experiences
- The replies to our survey by 47 LIFE projects and the quality of the answers gave us the idea what it was worth to TALK WITH EACH OTHER, to make you meeting each other!
- We understood from the survey that communication is target group dependent – they are CORE!
- Therefore, we grouped the event according to them:
 - Tourists and nature conservation stakeholders – same goals, different goals?
 - Landowners, local inhabitants, farmers and foresters – the hard nuts to crack: economic interests versus conservation
 - And the biggest piece of art: journalists and media



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The vision of this meeting



- From the beginning we were clear that we do not want a classical seminar with presentations after presentations
- The need to create a virtual event made this even more evident
- We would like to moderate a discussion among you, the communication and conservation experts
- And we wanted to foster a real exchange for learning something, for applying it in YOUR projects
- So, we will try a very active set of panels and break out groups and look what develops from it
- We will be recording plenary and groups and want to document this meeting – for you, who took part (as detailed as possible) and for the outside world as summary report

We also want a feedback to our communication guide from you here at place (and hope you read the document 😊)

And we want to influence the LIFE programme and the current work on the guidance docs for the new period: more space and better space for communication actions!



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MEADOW BIRDS LIFE

A LIFE+ project of the federal state of Lower Saxony

Heinrich Belting & Markus Nipkow

Lower Saxony Water Management, Coastal Protection and Nature Conservation Agency

Federal State Agency for Bird Protection

What are meadow birds ?



Curlew



Lapwing



Redshank



Black-tailed Godwit



Common Snipe



Corncrake

What are meadow birds ?

- ground breeding and precocial birds



Foto: M. Holy

Black-tailed Godwit family

a meadow bird needs...

- low, sparse vegetation
- high waterlevels





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a meadow bird needs...

- late mowing



- low grazing density





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a meadow bird needs...

...what a farmer can't use





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Lower Saxony
(47.000 km²)





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LIFE + Nature project meadow birds

Project area:

12 meadow bird core areas
in Lower Saxony (80.000 ha)

Budget: 22,3 Mio.€

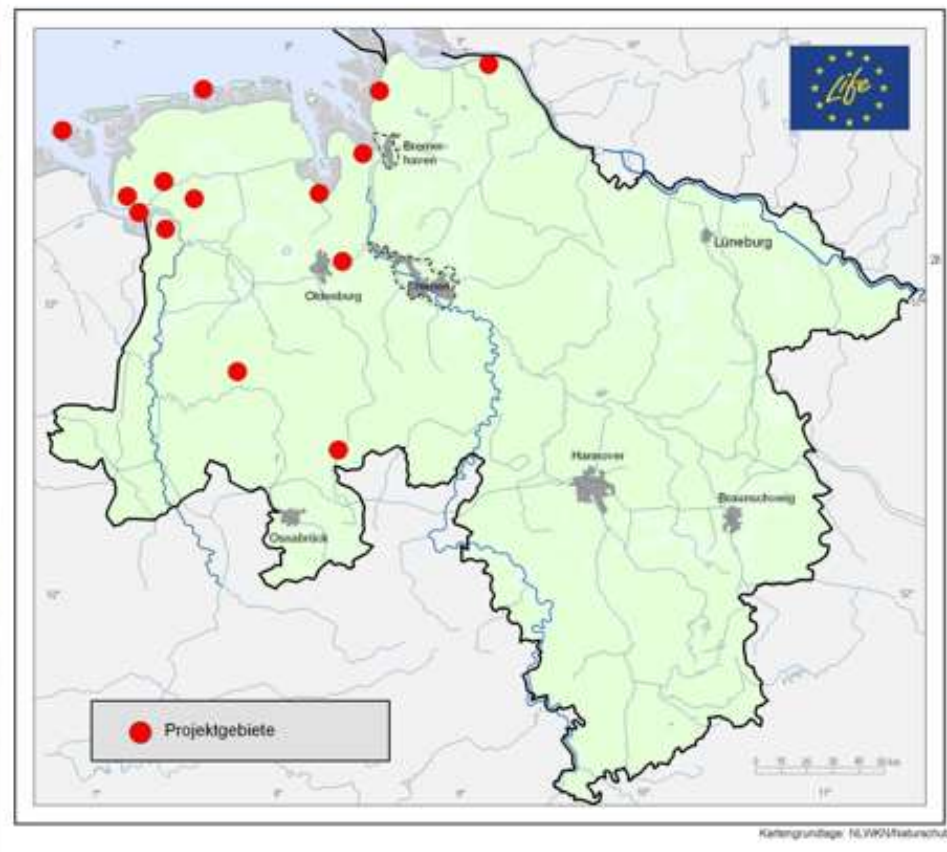
EU-contribution: 60%

Duration: 2011-2020



MEADOW BIRDS LIFE

A LIFE+ project of the federal state of Lower Saxony



Kartengrundlage: NLWKNaturschutz



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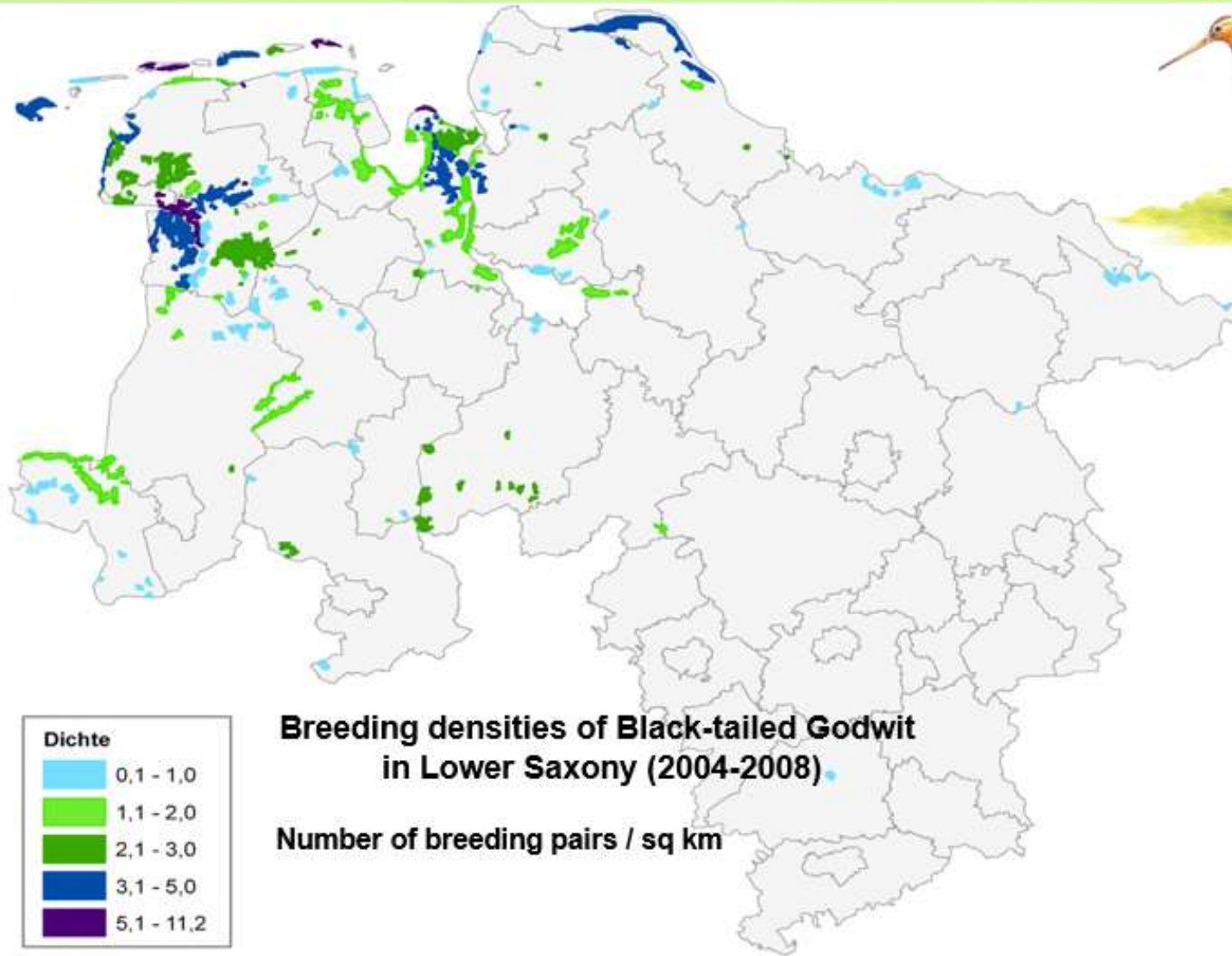
Core areas of meadow birds in the 80th (400.000 ha)



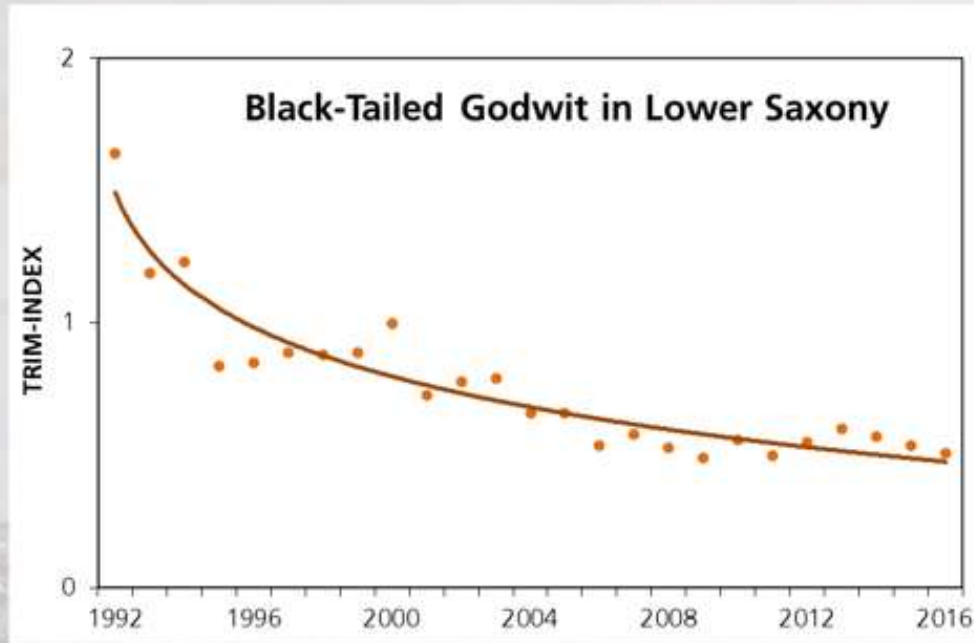


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Breeding population of Black-Tailed Godwit in Lower Saxony



1990 - 2016: - 70%

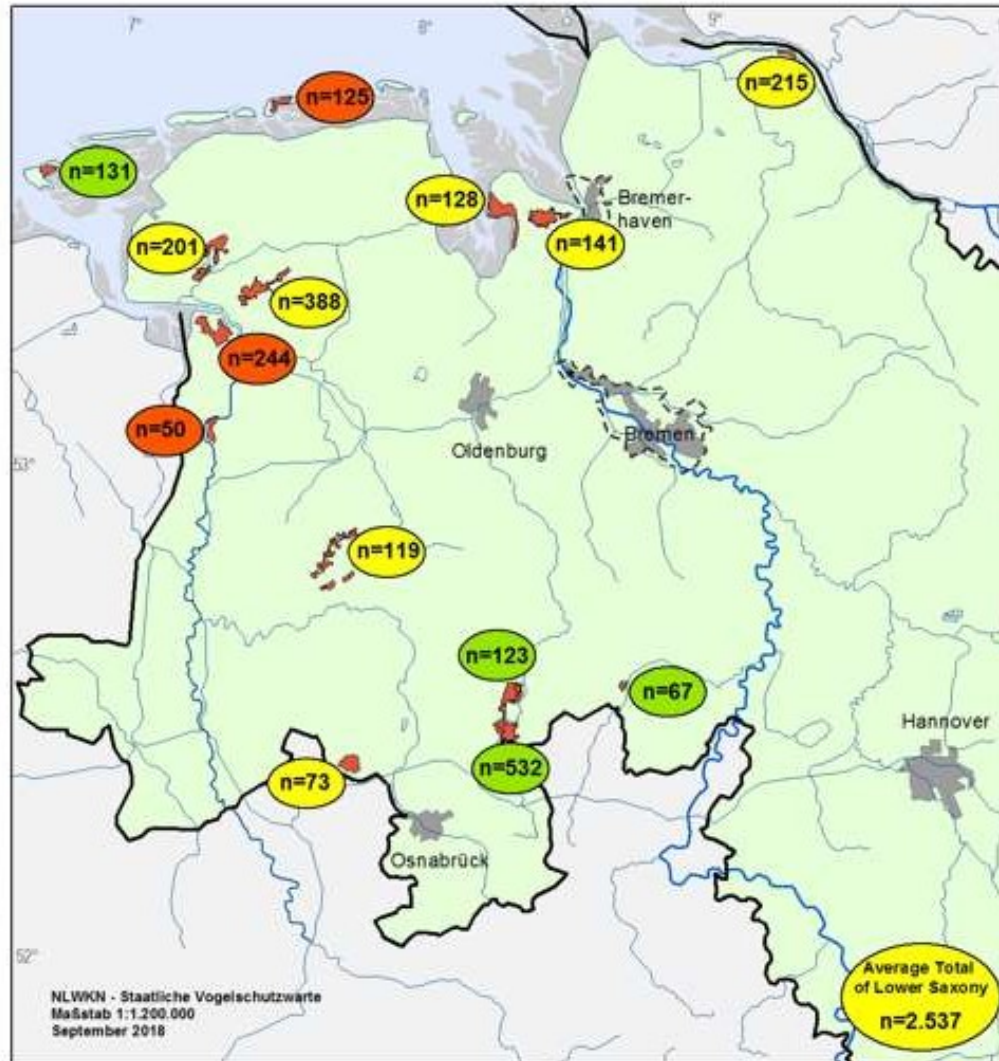
2000 - 2016: - 50%



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Reproduction Rate of Black-tailed Godwit in Lower Saxony 2012-2017

Average number of fledged
chicks per breeding pair

≥ 0,7 fledged chicks per pair
(sufficient for a growing
population)

≥ 0,4 - < 0,7 fledged chicks per
pair (possibly sufficient)

< 0,4 fledged chicks per pair
(not sufficient)

Sampling site

n Breeding pairs 2012-2017



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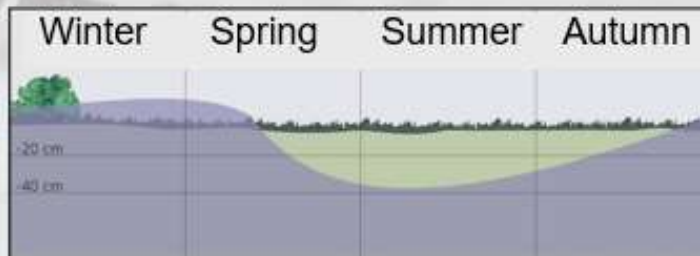
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Flooding of fens during winter season by adjustable weirs





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2017 - 03 - 08



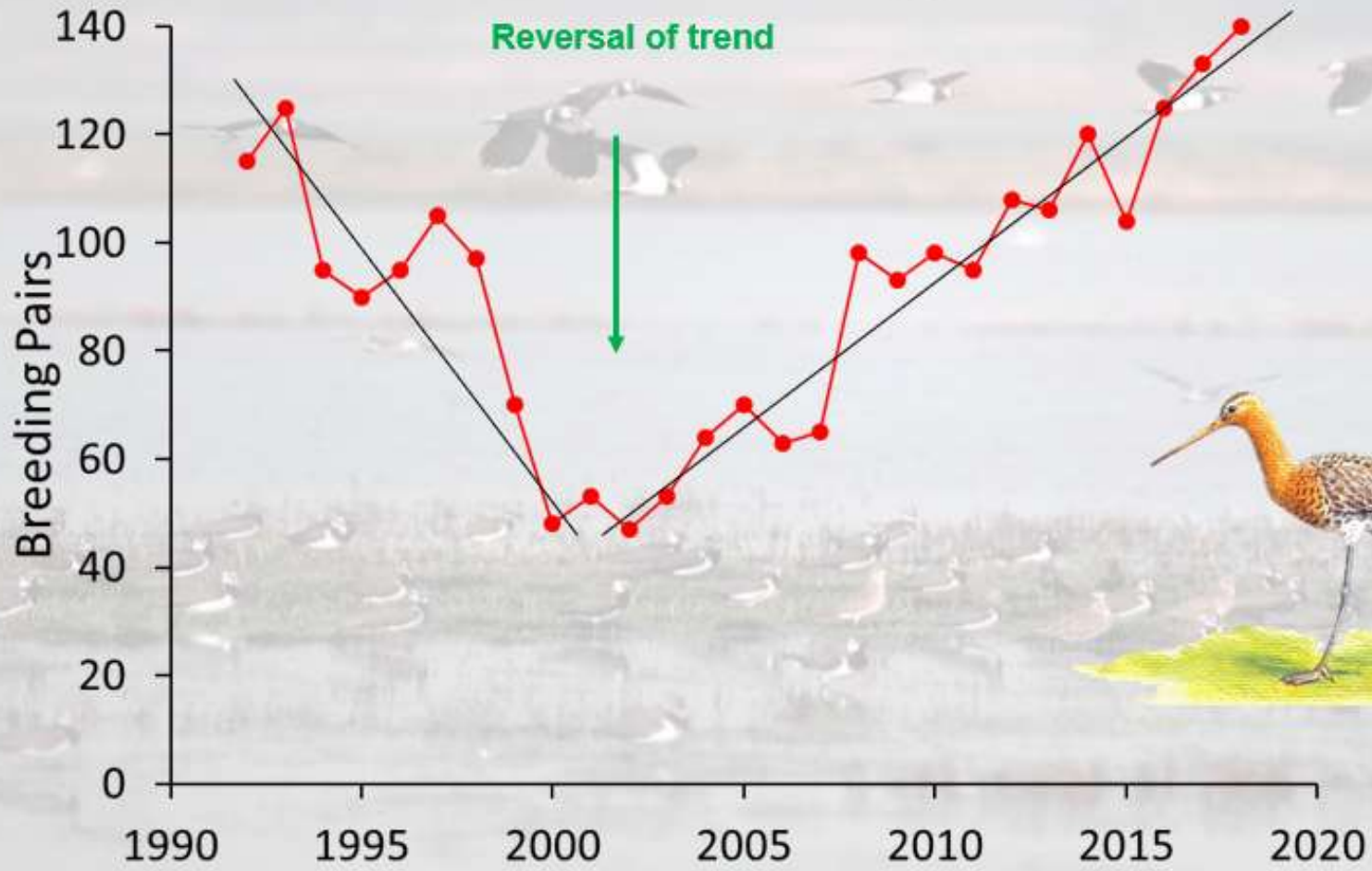
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Black-tailed Godwit at Dümmer



Source: Data Base of Naturschutzstation Dümmer and Naturschutzring Dümmer e.V.



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Foto: Holy



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Satellite tracking of Black-tailed Godwit (cooperation with University Groningen)





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Naturschutzstation Dümmer
Staatliche Vogelschutzwarte



Thanks a lot for your kind attention !

Foto: Trimbos



COMMUNICATION IN LIFE PROJECTS: EXPERIENCES CHALLENGES BEST PRACTICES

Online Seminar “The Art of Communication on Nature Management Measures” | 24.02.2021

Heidrun Fammler, Baltic Environmental Forum Germany



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International online survey among LIFE project actors

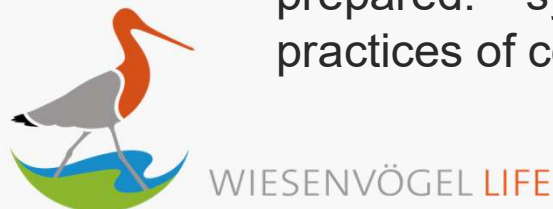
- 47 Projects participated based on a call on the LIFE website and a round mail by the external monitoring team

Survey among area managers of the LIFE Meadow Bird project

- 5 in-depth interviews

Goal of the survey

- To get input to the communication guide that was being prepared: synthesize experiences, challenges and best practices of communication in LIFE projects



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Facts about the survey participants and their projects

- 47 projects (35 NAT, 5 BIO, 7 GIE)
- 17 countries (most projects from Spain and Bulgaria, congrats!)

- **Project measures** (multiple answers possible):
 - species protection: 38 projects
 - habitat protection: 38 projects
 - Natura 2000 site designation or management: 31 projects
 - ecosystem protection: 34 projects

 - Governance: 34 projects
 - Education: all except 1; addressing diverse age groups



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Facts about the survey participants and their projects (2)

➤ **Communications** (multiple answers possible):

Communication and Information: 30 projects

Environmental awareness raising: 29 projects

Environmental behavior change: 11 projects

Acceptance measures: 21 projects

Conflict management: 15 projects



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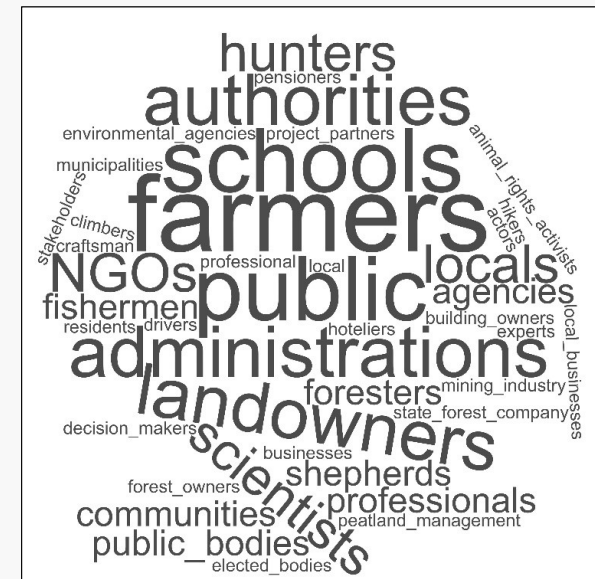


Question: with whom do the projects communicate?

- Researchers, farmers, land-owners, public administration, public and economic entities/businesses, local inhabitants, environmental NGOs...
- In most cases a comprehensive actors mapping has been reported: to learn about actors, their needs and their networks

Question: How do the projects communicate?

- A colorful bouquet of methods is used: presentations, press releases, websites, workshops, panels, exhibitions and routes, round tables, 1:1 talks, social media, emails,...



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Question: which reactions to you get from stakeholders?

- Mostly acceptance (however, often not right at project start)
- Resistance by individuals or smaller groups (e.g. animal right protection groups)

Question: If you faced resistance – why?

- Because of communication shortcomings: 9,8%
- Because of the measures: 31,7%
- Because of both: 17,1%
- No resistance: 41,5%

Question: can you name actors that are more often „difficult“

- Landowners, farmers, animal right protectors



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Question: How much of transparency is needed?

- All projects named maximum transparency as very important, especially regarding project goals, values and benefits of the projects
- About budgets only limited communication is recommended
- Exempt from transparency: sensitive data or management of predators (e.g. coordinates of bird nests)

Question: How much budget for communication?

- Currently 2 – (few) 20% of total budgets
- Wished/recommended: 5 - 40% of total Budget (mainly: 10-20%)

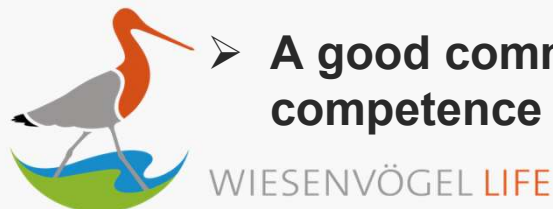


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Conclusions from the survey

- Many projects do comprehensive mapping of stakeholders/actors and do have a wide repertoire of communication methods; they find a maximum of transparency very important
- Door openers and mediators are important, „belonging to the group“ is often crucial.
- It is very important to create synergies (e.g.: protecting meadow birds is important for strengthening of biodiversity).
- **A good communicator has professional and social competence → training often is needed!**



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