

Brussels, 10 January 2011

More details on the new additions to the Community Natura 2000 lists

The latest update of the Natura 2000 lists concerns fifteen Member States: Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK. The number of "Sites of Community Importance" has increased to a total of 739, expanding the network by nearly 27 000 km².

The latest additions cover six bio-geographical regions – the Alpine, Atlantic, Boreal, Continental, Mediterranean and Pannonian regions.

This updating round adds a significant amount of marine areas to the Natura 2000 network. A total of 17 marine sites have been added, covering more than 17 500 km², mainly in France, Denmark and Spain. A large number of terrestrial sites have also been added by Poland and the Czech Republic.

In some Member States (Austria, Germany, Greece, Hungary and the UK) the update only concerns modifications to existing sites, such as adaptations of site areas. This has resulted in no overall change in the number of sites but in changes to the total area covered by the network.

France has added six sites, including four large marine sites, among them a 680 km² stretch of the Loire estuary which harbours important cold water reefs and sandbanks. The area is a nursery for juvenile fish and a vital stopping over area for long distance migrants such as the Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar* and the allis shad *Alosa alosa*. Further south along the Aquitaine coastline, a new marine site has been designated for the critically endangered European sea sturgeon *Acipenser sturio*.

Denmark has added nine marine sites in the Atlantic and Continental region covering a total area of nearly 4000 km². The sites, including the 2462km² Sydlige Nordsø will make a substantial contribution to the conservation of the harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena*. Denmark's coastal waters host some of the largest populations in the North Sea. The species has declined notably due to incidental catches in fishing gear.

Spain's contribution to the marine network is El Cachucho in the Atlantic region, an extensive offshore bank and seamount in the Cantabrian Sea. The area has been designated mainly to protect the extensive coral reefs which harbour an exceptional diversity of marine life including several giant sponges which have only recently been discovered. The site is also a vital staging area for a wide range of rare and endangered seabirds during migration. Spain has also added La Vall, an important coastal area in Menorca containing significant habitats such as coastal lagoons and sea cliffs and home to threatened species such as the Hermann's tortoise *Testudo hermanni*.

Poland has added over 450 new sites covering a total area of 8 900 km². New sites include Ostoja Napiwodzko-Ramucka in the Masurian Lake district, where 19 habitat types and 16 species of Community interest are found. The 326 km² site is home to pristine lakes and well preserved wetlands and is also rich in oak and hornbeam forests and a natural habitat for the wolf *Canis lupus* and the European pond turtle *Emys orbicularis*. The Kościół w Śliwicach site, one of the smallest added to the network, has been created to protect one of the biggest colonies of the greater mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis* in Poland which breed in a church dating back to 1830.

The Czech Republic has added over 200 sites. These include key areas of natural beech forests and wildlife rich meadows home to a wealth of fauna and flora. These include the rare stag beetle *Lucanus cervus* and butterflies such as the dusky large blue butterfly *Maculinea nausithous*. Sites include Moravský kras, also known as the Moravian Karst, a limestone region with more than 1,000 caves which are home to a range of bat species including the greater mouse-eared bat, *Myotis myotis*, barbastelle bats *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein's bats *Myotis bechsteinii* and Geoffroy's bats *Myotis emarginatus*. The dry grasslands above ground are particularly rich in plant life including species such as the *Echium russicum* and the pasque flower *Pulsatilla grandis*.

Estonia has added more than 30 sites covering a range of habitats of varying sizes from herb rich forests and alkaline fens to large areas of active raised bogs, home to endangered species such as the flying squirrel *Pteromys volans*. Several sites have also been designated to protect the rare Nordic alvar, a habitat that is exceptionally rich in plant life.

Cyprus has added three sites, including the Limni Paralimniou wetland, a seasonal lake that disappears entirely during the hot summer months. It is the second biggest site of its kind after the salt lakes of Larnaca and harbours one of the most important populations of the rare Cyprus grass snake *Natrix natrix cypriaca* on the island.

Italy has added four sites, including the Lago del Rendina in the Mediterranean region, home to yellow-bellied toads *Bombina variegata* and Europe's largest non-venomous snake, the four-lined snake *Elaphe quatuorlineata*.

Latvia has added five sites, including Lubana mitrajs in the Boreal Region which encompasses a vast wetland complex of flood plains and bogs surrounding Lake Lubans.

Sweden has added seven sites in the Boreal Region, including Sundmyren Åflo, an important habitat for flora and fauna such as field gentian *Gentianella campestris*, the orchid *Gymnadenia nigra* and the violet copper butterfly *Lycaena helle*.

The six updated lists were adopted on 10 January 2011.

For full details of the complete lists with the latest updates see:

http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/natura_2000/library?l=/candidate_importance/biogeographical&vm=detailed&sb=Title

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm