

Slovenia's Nature - A European Treasure



Natura 2000 is a European network of protected areas designated by the European Union member states. The main purpose of the network is to conserve valuable bio-diversity for future generations. In these areas, we wish to conserve plant and animal species and habitats that are rare or endangered in Europe.

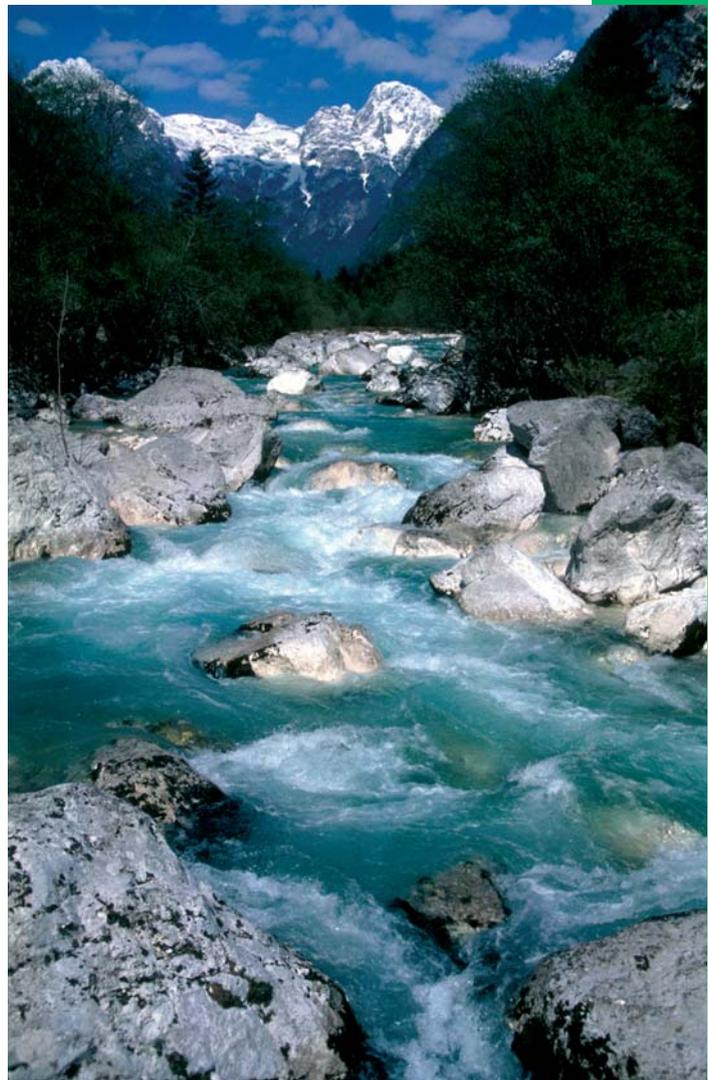
The European Union started the Natura 2000 network as an important way of implementing the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives. When Slovenia joined the European Union, it submitted a list of sites that meet the criteria of these two directives.

The aim is to support sustainable development that can satisfy the needs of present generations while doing no harm to future ones. Human activities are not excluded from Natura 2000 sites, although we have to ensure that they do not endanger the natural environment, but rather, wherever possible, support its conservation.

Conserved woodlands constitute two thirds of the Natura 2000 sites in Slovenia. One of the species living here is the pygmy owl.



Photograph: Milan Vogrin



Photograph: Jože A. Mihelič / Archive of the Triglav National Park

Life in waters and alongside them is an indicator of the conservation of water ecosystems.

Natura 2000 in numbers



Photograph: Tihomir Makovec

Posidonia oceanica grows on the sea floor between Koper and Izola. This is the northern-most Adriatic or Mediterranean location where it can be found.

Oxbow lakes are natural jewels of the Pomurje region and one of the most beautiful - Muriša - lies in the extreme eastern part of Slovenia.

In April 2004, Slovenia determined which sites should belong to the Natura 2000 network and undertook to suitably protect them. It defined 26 sites for bird conservation and 260 sites for the conservation of habitat types and species. Thus there are 286 Natura 2000 sites in total, encompassing approximately 35 percent of the country. A particular characteristic of Slovenia is its great diversity of animal and plant species in a small area, and its well-conserved nature. The sites are home to 111 threatened plant and animal species protected by the Habitats Directive and 105 species protected by the Wild Birds Directive. With regard to the number of protected species and the proportion of its national territory included in the Natura 2000 network, Slovenia is at the very top of the European list.

Two thirds of sites are forested, a substantial part consists of areas with little vegetation (mainly rock walls), just under a tenth are areas above the tree line, and there are also notable areas of grasslands. A quarter of the total Natura 2000 sites in Slovenia fall within the Triglav National Park, regional and landscape parks, or are designated as nature reserves or natural monuments.

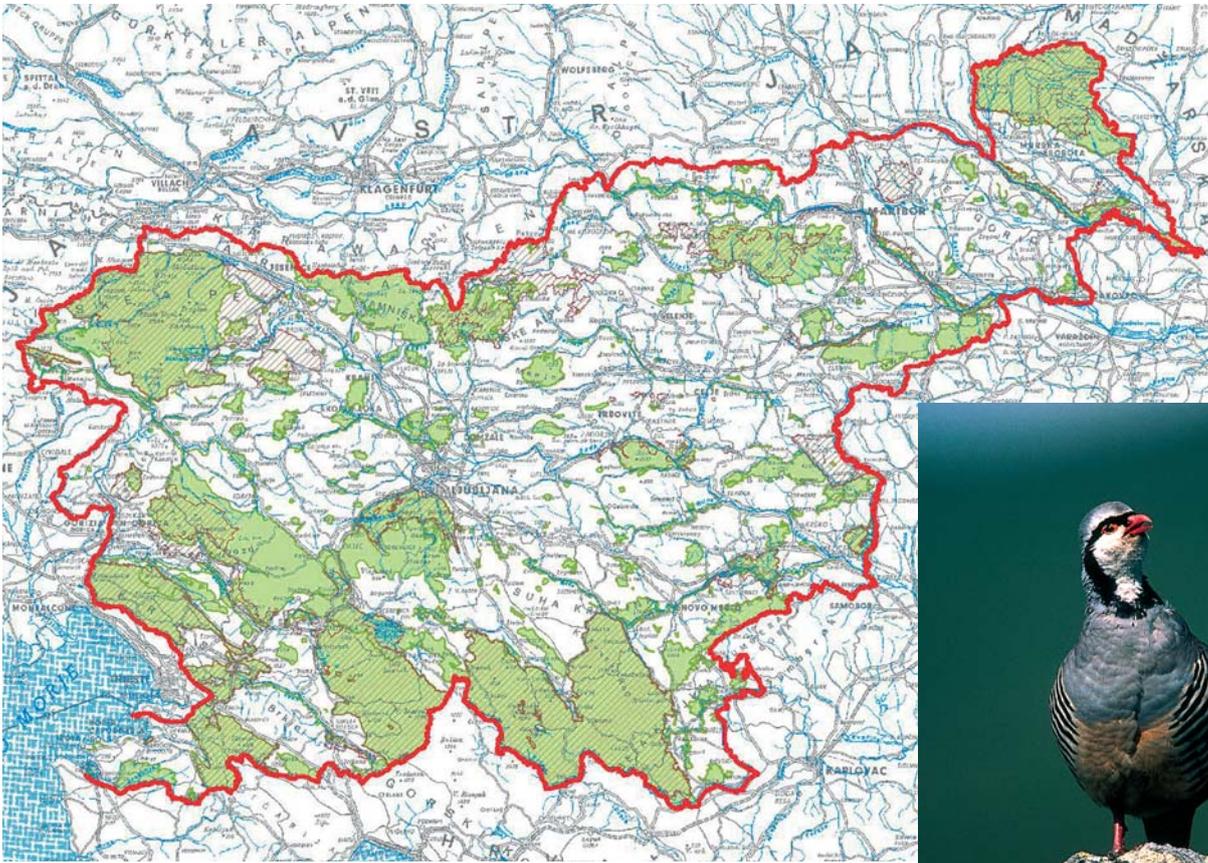


Photograph: Matjaž Bedjanič



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Marsilia is very rare in Slovenia and the rest of Europe.



Special Protection Areas under the Wild Birds Directive:
 number of sites: 26
 area: 498,046 ha
 proportion of Slovenia's territory: 22.8 %



Potential Sites of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive:
 number of sites: 260
 area: 639,878 ha
 proportion of Slovenia's territory: 31.5 %

The sites mostly overlap - 60 percent of potential Sites of Community Interest under the Habitats Directive is within the Special Protection Areas proposed under the Wild Birds Directive.

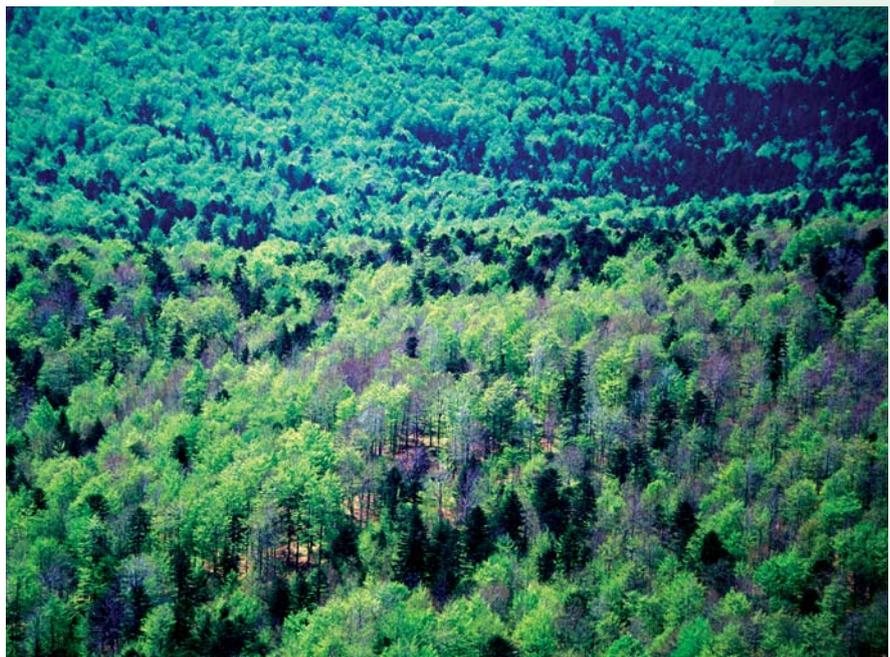


Photograph: Luka Božič

In recent decades, the number of rock partridges in Slovenia has been falling due to the abandonment of pastures and the fact that the slopes of Karst hills have become overgrown.

A conserved nature is a development opportunity

The areas we have conserved as part of Natura 2000 network represent a development opportunity for numerous activities, especially nature-friendly forms of farming and eco-tourism. The European Union offers co-financing for nature-protection projects (LIFE Nature), nature-friendly approaches to farming (rural development funds and structural funds) and other activities related to sustainable development (structural funds). A few such projects are already underway in Slovenia and some have already been completed, for example at Kraški rob, Cerkniško polje, Ljubljansko barje, on the Pokljuka plateau, in the Kozjansko region, in the Sečovlje salt-pans and in Škocjan Bay.



Photograph: Špela Habič

*Woodlands of European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) were added to the Annex I of the Habitats Directive on the basis of a proposal from Slovenia.*

Do you want to find out more about the Natura 2000 sites?

This leaflet is the second in a series of information materials on the implementation of Natura 2000 project in Slovenia. More information can be found on the web site of the Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy - www.natura2000.gov.si - on which you can also find all the related legislation and technical sources. Any questions and suggestions can be sent to info.mop@gov.si.

To find out more about specific Natura 2000 sites in Slovenia, please contact the regional units of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation. Natura 2000 sites can also be seen on the "interactive nature-protection atlas", which can be found on the web site of the Slovenian Environmental Agency www.arso.gov.si.

For information on LIFE Nature projects, please write to Mrs Vesna Kolar Planinšič (vesna.kolar-planinsic@gov.si) at the Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy. Any questions relating to European Union rural development funds or structural funds can be addressed to Mrs Janja Kokolj Prošek (janja.kokolj@gov.si) at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food.

Published by
Ministry of the Environment, Spatial
Planning and Energy, Dunajska cesta
48, Ljubljana

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Ministry of the Environment, Spatial
Planning and Energy - Environmental
Agency of the Republic of Slovenia

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Design
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Lay-out and print
Littera Picta, Ljubljana

Number of English copies printed
1000

Ljubljana, July 2004



Ophrys holosericea is extremely rare in Slovenia and can only be found in the Kozjansko region. This beautiful orchid can only be conserved by prudent farming, without the use of fertilisers and chemicals.

Photograph: Metka Škornik / Archive of the Kozjansko regional park

