

LIFE Great Bustard



Cross-border protection of the Great Bustard in Central Europe is a 7-year nature conservation project started in 2016, implemented in Austrian-Hungarian cooperation, funded by EU LIFE Nature, co-funded by the responsible Ministries of the two countries.

Main project beneficiary is Österreichische Gesellschaft Großtrappenschutz (Austrian Great Bustard Society), project partners are powerline companies and nature conservation organisations. In Hungary Kiskunság National Park Directorate coordinates the activities of other two National Park Directorates (Körös-Maros NPD and Bükk NPD), ELMŰ (powerline company) and BirdLife Hungary/MME. The project sites are core breeding areas of the species in Hungary and in Austria, namely: Upper-Kiskunság, Dévaványa Plain, Békés-Csanád Plain, Heves Plain and Borsod Plain. The population of the Moson Plain is continuous with that of Austria.

The aim of the project is to stabilize the population of Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in the Carpathian Basin on the long run, by managing the main threatening factors: collision with mid-voltage power lines, predation of nests, negative effects of intensive agriculture, lack of knowledge and unintentional human disturbance.

During the implementation, at least 25 km of mid-voltage powerlines will be converted into underground cables in the most sensitive areas. Key predators of the Great Bustard, such as fox, badger, and corvids will be managed by innovative hunting techniques in cooperation with professional hunters and hunting associations. At least 12 Great Bustard individuals will be GPS-tagged in order to investigate key mortality factors of chicks, habitat suitability/preference, and metapopulation dynamics. Information and education materials will be prepared and presented for farmers, field controllers and farmer advisors/consultants on nature-friendly agricultural methods and techniques. Co-operations will be initiated with agro-technology companies to assess existing agro-technologies in the light of environmental/natural effects and also to design/develop nature-friendly solutions. Great bustard visitor centre will be established in Kiskunság as an information and education hub; information campaigns will be carried out and discussion opportunities will be established for all relevant stakeholders (hunters, farmers, agriculture consultants and agriculture supply experts). Effect of project actions will be followed by monitoring of Great Bustard, co-existing protected bird species and also small game species.

