

*Symposium on Fire Management in Cultural and Natural Landscapes, Nature Conservation and
Forestry in Temperate-Boreal Eurasia
Freiburg, Germany, 25-27 January 2008*

*Fire management of open landscapes
in Poland
Conservation needs and legal status*



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*Open landscapes in Poland belongs to areas with often
very high biodiversity value as they holds:*

- a. Threatened habitats e.g. listed on Annex I EU Habitat Directive
 - xerothermic grasslands
 - *Molinia* meadows
 - open fen mires
 - peat bogs
- b. Threatened plant species e.g. listed on Annex II EU Habitat Directive
 - orchids
 - steppe grasslands plants
 - calcareous grasslands plants

Open fen mires



Open fen mire after accidental burning



Succession start on open fen mire if not managed



Mowing as an management option on open fen mire



Open landscapes in Poland belongs to areas with often very high biodiversity value as they holds:

- c. Threatened invertebrate species e.g. listed on Annex II EU Habitat Directive
 - butterflies connected with *Molinia* meadows and xerothermic grasslands
 - dragonflies connected with fen mires and peat bogs
- d. Threatened bird species e.g. listed on Annex I EU Bird Directive
 - waders (curlew, great snipe)
 - rails (spotted crane, corncrake)
 - raptors (Montagu's harrier, marsh harrier)
 - passerines (aquatic warbler)

Molinia meadow



Calcereous grasslands with orchids



Montagu's harrier breeding in open fen mire



Curlew breeding in open fen mire



In recent decades we are facing rapid ecosystem changes due to abandonment of traditional farming practices

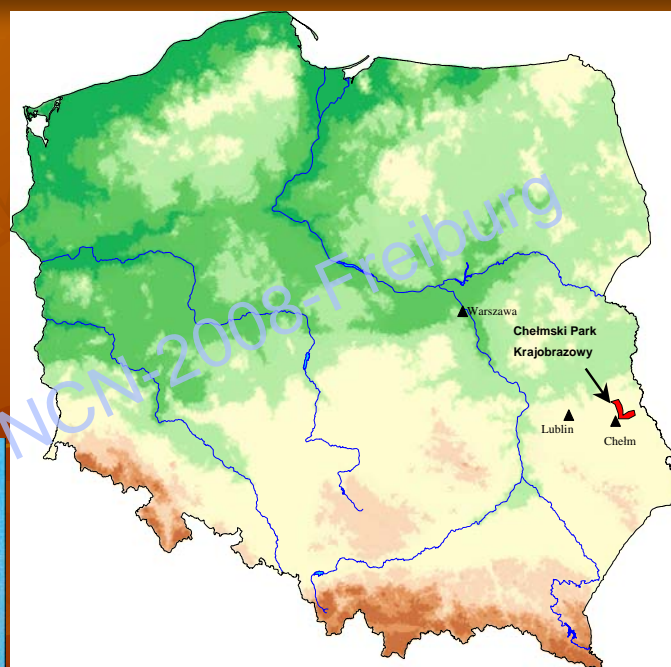
- Important factor in fen mires and river valleys where, if cutting of vegetation and/or burning (or at some places grazing) is ceased, natural succession takes place and habitats loss their biodiversity due to overgrowing by high reeds, willow bushes or succession forests of birch or alder.
- In the past reeds used to be occasionally harvested in the Biebrza Marshes and along rivers for use on floors and for thatching, etc., together with the more important harvesting of sedges as poor quality hay and the active elimination of bushes. These traditions have now stopped at many places.

*Burning was often used as a management tool
in pastoral agriculture in Poland*

- But uncontrolled fires, especially in spring and summer and if the mire is very dry, cause severe habitat destruction by burning out of the upper peat layer.
- In Biebrza National Park in 1994 there was a 3,000 ha fire which caused a great deal of soil mineralization, but uncontrolled burning is more often a direct threat, especially to insects, birds and nests during the breeding season.
- In some fen mires, burned areas of suitable habitat were reoccupied by breeding birds only 5-6 years after fire.

Case study:

Aquatic Warbler
on Chelm
Marshes



Succession of bushes in Chelm Marshes (SE Poland)



Breeding density of Aquatic Warbler in Chelm Marshes (after study of Gryniewiczski)





Regenerated Cladium mire in autumn



 **EU LIFE project**
„Conserving of Aquatic Warbler
in Poland and Germany” 


Polish Society
for the Protection of Birds

in partnership with

 The Royal Society for the
Protection of Birds

 North-Podlaskie Society for
Bird Protection

 Western Pomeranian
Ornithological Society

 Wolin National Park

 Biebrza National Park

 "Förderverein Naturschutz im
Peenetal e.V."






Key Project Facts




- **Duration: 2005-2010**
- **9 project sites in 2 countries (all NATURA 2000 sites)**
- **7 project partners in 3 countries (5 of them NGOs, 2 NPs)**
- **Budget:**
 - 5.4 m € (75% EU grant, 25% partners and co-financers)
 - **Co-financers: RSPB, Swarovski Optics, Cemex**



Project sites

2 main project regions:

- **Pomerania**
- **Biebrza Marshes**



Open fen mire in Biebrza National Park



Succession of bushes in Biebrza National Park



Open fen mire in Peene Valley (NE Germany)



Investigate feasibility of controlled burning and negotiate the possibility of legally employing this technique as a non-expensive management tool

- Controlled vegetation burning is within this project only planned at the German project site Peene Valley, because it is currently illegal to do so in Poland
- The effects of the controlled burning activity at this project site will be closely monitored.
- A separate document on the observed effects of this experiment will be prepared, taking into account relevant experience from other conservation projects.

Investigate feasibility of controlled burning and negotiate the possibility of legally employing this technique as a non-expensive management tool

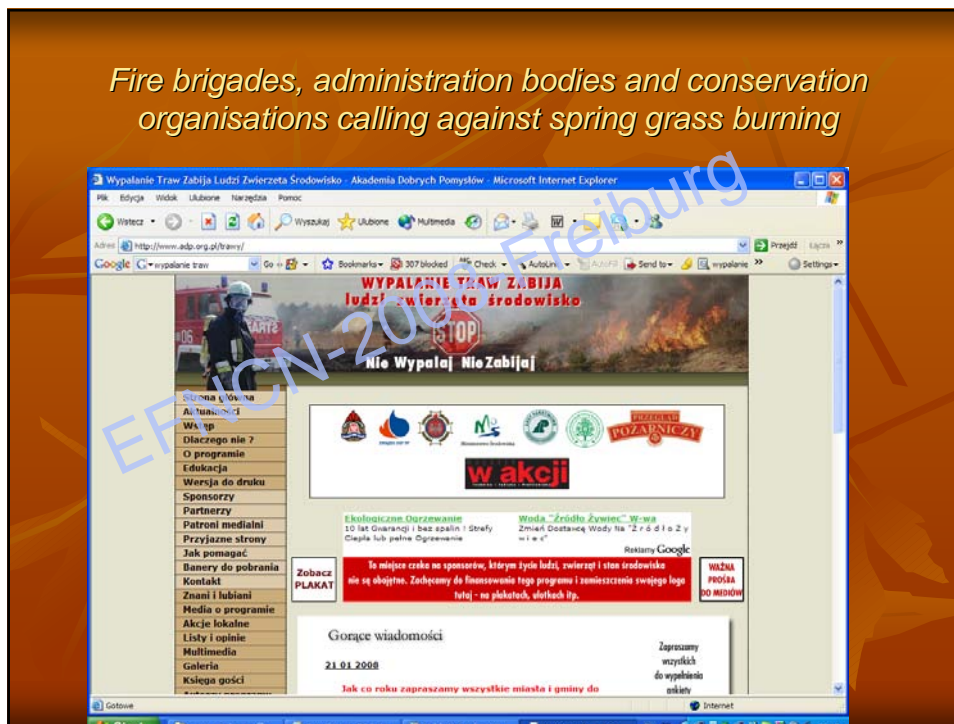
- If the result of the experiment are favourable from a conservation point of view, this study is to be used to raise the issue of controlled burning as a potential management tool at project sites and within the relevant authorities especially in the Polish Ministry of Environment.
- Permission should then be asked for further experimental burning at sites in Poland. Depending on the results of the experiments and considering possible negative PR effects, the project will lobby for the permission of management burning as a management tool under certain circumstances.

Legal acts prohibiting use of fire in Poland

- Art. 124 of Nature Conservation Act
- Art. 30 of Forest Act
- Art. 2 Farmer Subsidies and Direct Payment Act



Fire brigades, administration bodies and conservation organisations calling against spring grass burning



Considering land abandonment and succession is a serious threat for biodiversity

Polish Society for the Protection of Birds will act in Poland:

- to raise the issue of controlled burning as a potential management tool among conservation bodies, foresters and general public
- to lobby for the permission of management burning as a management tool within the relevant authorities especially in the Polish Ministry of Environment.

Therefore we welcome initiative of EFNCN of preparing White Paper on the Use of Prescribed Fire in Land Management, Nature Conservation and Forestry.

Thank you!