

10th REPORT OF THE FACE | BIODIVERSITY MANIFESTO



Highlights of 2024



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FACE - European Federation for Hunting and Conservation

Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe's 7 million hunters as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation. This makes FACE the largest democratically representative body for hunters in the world and probably one of the largest European civil society organisations. FACE is made up of national hunters' associations from 37 European countries.

The vision of FACE is a Europe rich in biodiversity and hunting opportunities.

www.face.eu
www.biodiversitymanifesto.com



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The FACE Biodiversity Manifesto (BDM) is a substantial database of evidence of how hunting contributes to biodiversity. These conservation projects provide not only inspiration but clear and practical examples of how hunters contribute to habitat restoration, protected areas, species monitoring and much more.

A shared characteristic of hunting across Europe is that it comprises an essential part of nature conservation and wildlife management. This is important as Europe is trying to deal with a biodiversity crisis through many policies and initiatives in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

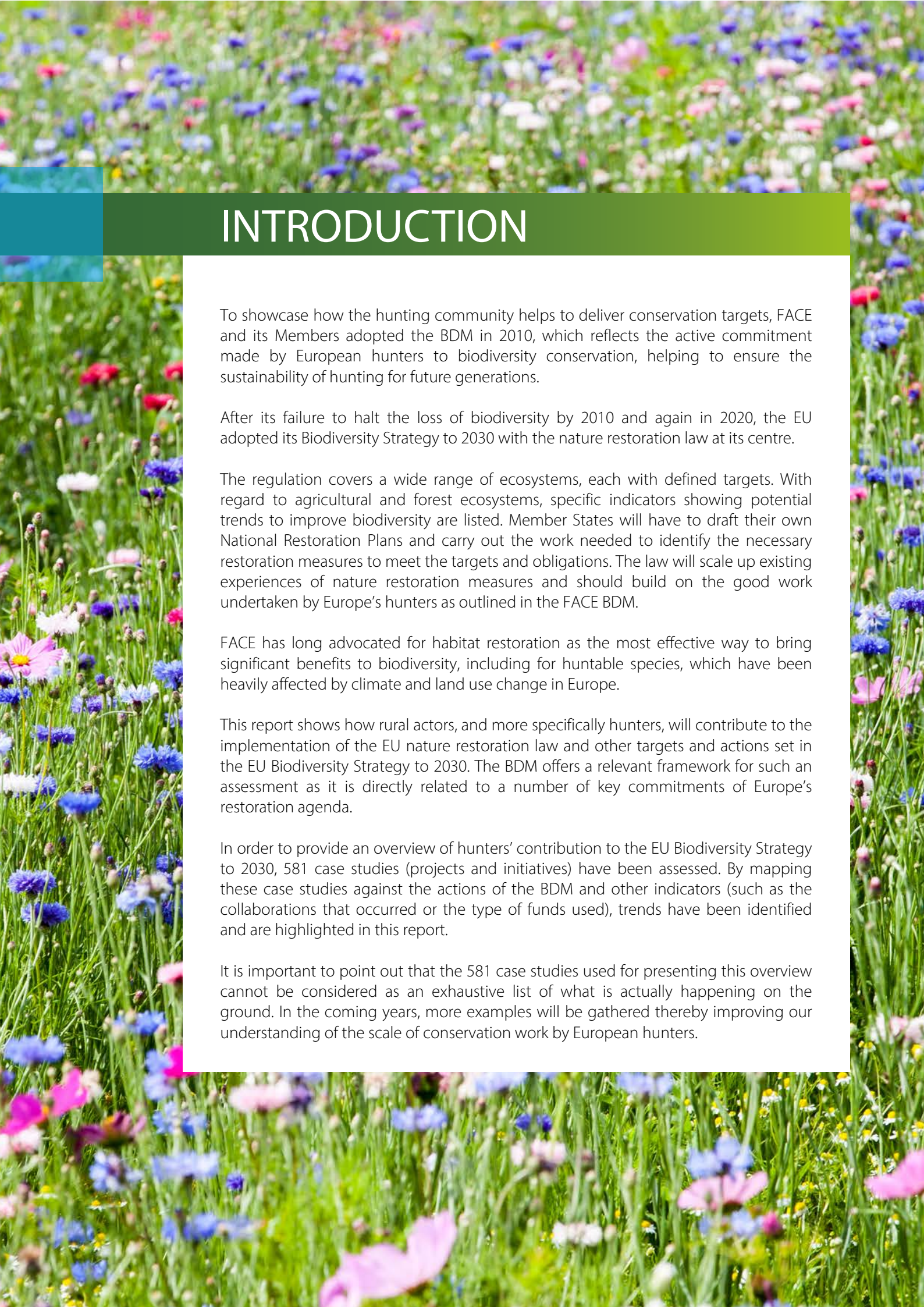
Since 2013, FACE has been recording hunting-related conservation projects through its Biodiversity Manifesto. The Biodiversity Manifesto currently represents a substantial database of hunting-related conservation projects, which support FACE's advocacy work in Brussels. We now have strong evidence to show that hunters make a crucial contribution to habitat restoration, protected areas, species monitoring and much more.

We are proud to present the 10th report of the FACE BDM is based on 581 conservation initiatives by hunters. This includes a total of 51 new projects added in 2024, some of which are highlighted in this report.

The year 2024 also witnessed a landmark decision with the Nature Restoration Regulation came into force on 18 August 2024. This regulation establishes an EU overarching target for Member States to put in place effective and area-based restoration measures to jointly cover at least 20% of land areas and at least 20% of sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. Under this new legal framework, Member States are required to prepare National Restoration Plans. FACE and its Members hope for firm commitments to scale up habitat restoration actions.

Nature restoration is and always was a key concern for Europe's hunters. In total, 260 (45%) projects in the FACE BDM focus on habitat restoration ranging from agricultural to wetlands habitats. 38% of all projects deal with the conservation of birds and their habitats, and 75 projects (14%) are undertaken in protected areas. All of the projects involve private investment by the hunting community into nature conservation, either in addition to public funding or entirely self-financed.





INTRODUCTION

To showcase how the hunting community helps to deliver conservation targets, FACE and its Members adopted the BDM in 2010, which reflects the active commitment made by European hunters to biodiversity conservation, helping to ensure the sustainability of hunting for future generations.

After its failure to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and again in 2020, the EU adopted its Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 with the nature restoration law at its centre.

The regulation covers a wide range of ecosystems, each with defined targets. With regard to agricultural and forest ecosystems, specific indicators showing potential trends to improve biodiversity are listed. Member States will have to draft their own National Restoration Plans and carry out the work needed to identify the necessary restoration measures to meet the targets and obligations. The law will scale up existing experiences of nature restoration measures and should build on the good work undertaken by Europe's hunters as outlined in the FACE BDM.

FACE has long advocated for habitat restoration as the most effective way to bring significant benefits to biodiversity, including for huntable species, which have been heavily affected by climate and land use change in Europe.

This report shows how rural actors, and more specifically hunters, will contribute to the implementation of the EU nature restoration law and other targets and actions set in the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. The BDM offers a relevant framework for such an assessment as it is directly related to a number of key commitments of Europe's restoration agenda.

In order to provide an overview of hunters' contribution to the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, 581 case studies (projects and initiatives) have been assessed. By mapping these case studies against the actions of the BDM and other indicators (such as the collaborations that occurred or the type of funds used), trends have been identified and are highlighted in this report.

It is important to point out that the 581 case studies used for presenting this overview cannot be considered as an exhaustive list of what is actually happening on the ground. In the coming years, more examples will be gathered thereby improving our understanding of the scale of conservation work by European hunters.

HIGHLIGHTS 2024

The actions conducted by hunters are diverse. They range from planting trees and hedges to educating children about living in harmony with nature and keeping nature free from litter.

Proportion of case studies contributing to the categories of the BDM

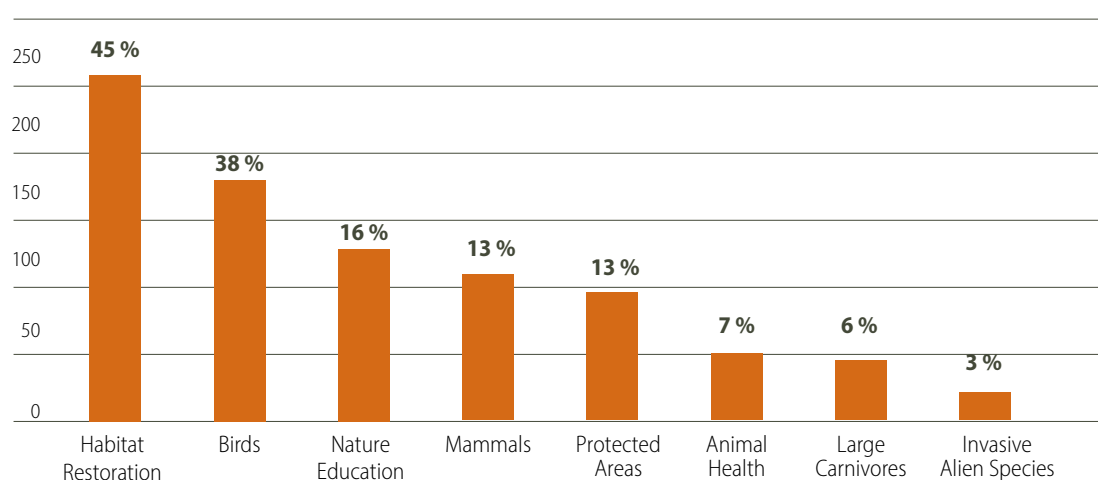


Figure 1. Summary of the 581 initiatives undertaken by hunters for nature conservation

In general, management (e.g. conservation and restoration) of habitats/species and research/monitoring are the most common actions. These actions help to halt the deterioration of species' protection status and habitats covered by European nature legislation.

The 581 hunters' initiatives distributed across Europe are in many cases contributing to the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030. There is a need to stress that most of the actions conducted by hunters are undertaken on a voluntary basis and that hunters are investing a huge amount of their personal time into nature conservation.

Some national studies have attempted to quantify this investment in monetary terms. For example, in Italy the value of maintenance of wetland habitats by hunters in Italy is at least €393 million, and potentially as much as €1.7 billion annually. For other habitat types the value is €315 million, and potentially as much as €1.2 billion annually (source: FIDC) .

To put this value into perspective it should be noted that the estimated annual cost of restoring 30% of habitats listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive by 2030 have been estimated at €8.2 billion. This estimate covers the costs of restoring, re-establishing, and maintenance of habitats.

1. NATURE RESTORATION

Hunters have undertaken actions aiming to restore, improve or maintain habitats in 260 case studies

"Protecting habitats is a fundamental means to conserve wild flora and fauna, thereby maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services. Ultimately it is through individual actions at grassroots level that a difference can be made."

This BDM category covers actions contributing to the key element "Restoring degraded ecosystems" of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 through the maintenance and improvement of habitats as well as the inclusion of sustainable agriculture and forestry principles.

Types of habitats involved in conservation projects by hunters

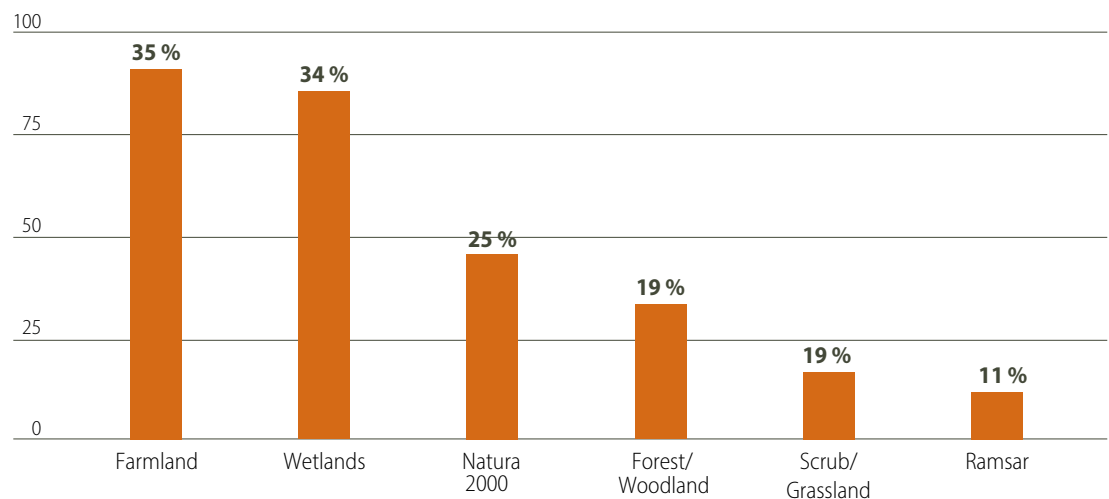


Figure 3. Types of habitats conserved/managed in BDM projects.

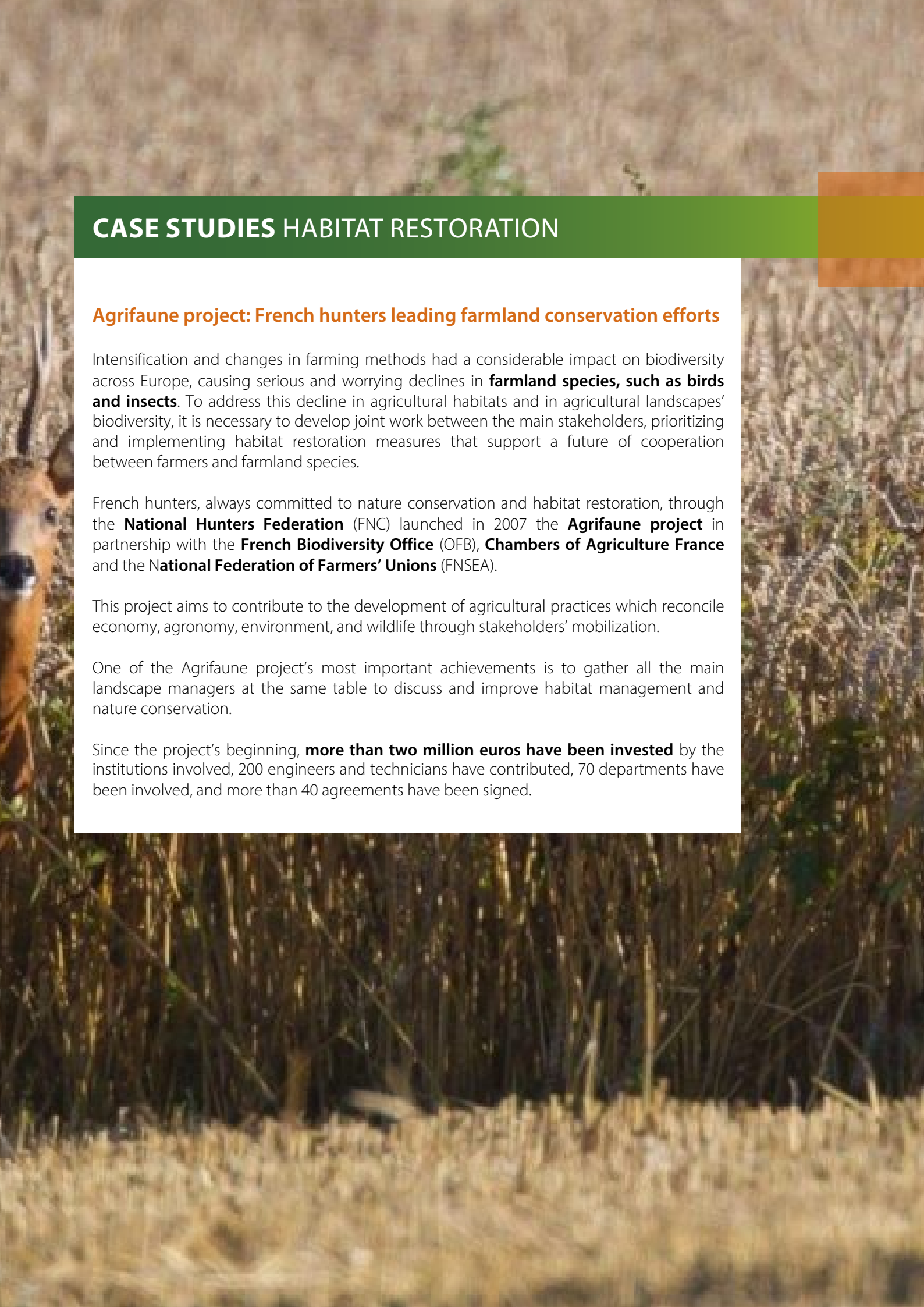
In total, 45% of the 581 case studies are dedicated to habitat restoration with farmland habitats and wetlands being the most frequent. This reflects the important value of biodiverse wetlands for hunters and their long-lasting involvement in conserving them. Moreover, hunters were often the very first group to notice the decrease of small game populations on Europe's farmlands, mostly due to intensification of agriculture. Therefore, hunters are also the ones to initiate actions against farmland biodiversity loss.

The projects focussing on wetlands typically relate to waterbird conservation actions such as the maintenance of open water sites and the creation of new wetlands for ducks, geese and waders. Although the EU is failing to restore degraded ecosystems, hunters all around Europe have been helping in the restoration of habitats. The following case study on habitat restoration is a good example of hunters' involvement in habitat restoration and conservation.

The actions undertaken by hunters on farmlands mainly target three species: the Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), the European Hare (*Lepus europaeus*) and the Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus scotica*). To combat the decrease of partridges and hares, numerous actions are undertaken such as convincing farmers to leave space for wild plants and flowers, creating and managing 'biodiversity' areas, providing food and water in difficult periods and managing generalist predators.

Many projects also engaged with more than one habitat type. For example, it is typical for BDM projects that focus on the conservation of small game to work on both farmland habitats and woodland edges.





CASE STUDIES HABITAT RESTORATION

Agrifaune project: French hunters leading farmland conservation efforts

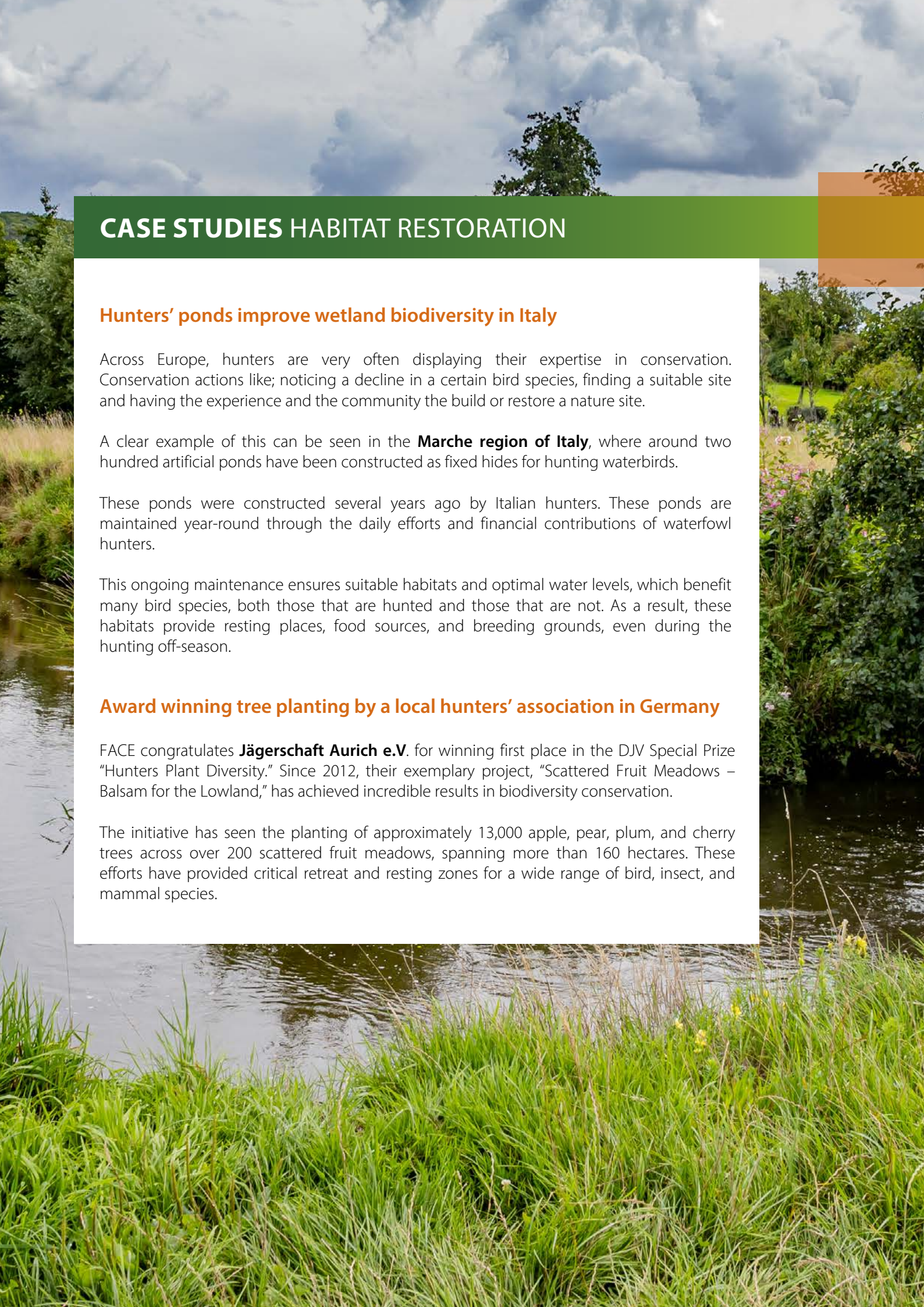
Intensification and changes in farming methods had a considerable impact on biodiversity across Europe, causing serious and worrying declines in **farmland species, such as birds and insects**. To address this decline in agricultural habitats and in agricultural landscapes' biodiversity, it is necessary to develop joint work between the main stakeholders, prioritizing and implementing habitat restoration measures that support a future of cooperation between farmers and farmland species.

French hunters, always committed to nature conservation and habitat restoration, through the **National Hunters Federation** (FNC) launched in 2007 the **Agrifaune project** in partnership with the **French Biodiversity Office** (OFB), **Chambers of Agriculture France** and the **National Federation of Farmers' Unions** (FNSEA).

This project aims to contribute to the development of agricultural practices which reconcile economy, agronomy, environment, and wildlife through stakeholders' mobilization.

One of the Agrifaune project's most important achievements is to gather all the main landscape managers at the same table to discuss and improve habitat management and nature conservation.

Since the project's beginning, **more than two million euros have been invested** by the institutions involved, 200 engineers and technicians have contributed, 70 departments have been involved, and more than 40 agreements have been signed.



CASE STUDIES HABITAT RESTORATION

Hunters' ponds improve wetland biodiversity in Italy

Across Europe, hunters are very often displaying their expertise in conservation. Conservation actions like; noticing a decline in a certain bird species, finding a suitable site and having the experience and the community the build or restore a nature site.

A clear example of this can be seen in the **Marche region of Italy**, where around two hundred artificial ponds have been constructed as fixed hides for hunting waterbirds.

These ponds were constructed several years ago by Italian hunters. These ponds are maintained year-round through the daily efforts and financial contributions of waterfowl hunters.

This ongoing maintenance ensures suitable habitats and optimal water levels, which benefit many bird species, both those that are hunted and those that are not. As a result, these habitats provide resting places, food sources, and breeding grounds, even during the hunting off-season.

Award winning tree planting by a local hunters' association in Germany

FACE congratulates **Jägerschaft Aurich e.V.** for winning first place in the DJV Special Prize "Hunters Plant Diversity." Since 2012, their exemplary project, "Scattered Fruit Meadows – Balsam for the Lowland," has achieved incredible results in biodiversity conservation.

The initiative has seen the planting of approximately 13,000 apple, pear, plum, and cherry trees across over 200 scattered fruit meadows, spanning more than 160 hectares. These efforts have provided critical retreat and resting zones for a wide range of bird, insect, and mammal species.

2. SPECIES CONSERVATION

Hunters have undertaken actions aiming to improve knowledge and manage species of interest in 349 case studies

"As hunters, we will continue to work with positive incentives to conserve not only huntable species but all species."

FACE Biodiversity Manifesto

Healthy and resilient ecosystems depend on all their components, both the species and natural conditions. The continued intensification of agriculture makes the need to conserve species and their habitats more urgent than ever. The new EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 aims to promote the maintenance and improvement of habitats as well as the inclusion of sustainable agriculture and forestry principles.

Groups of species concerned by hunter's actions

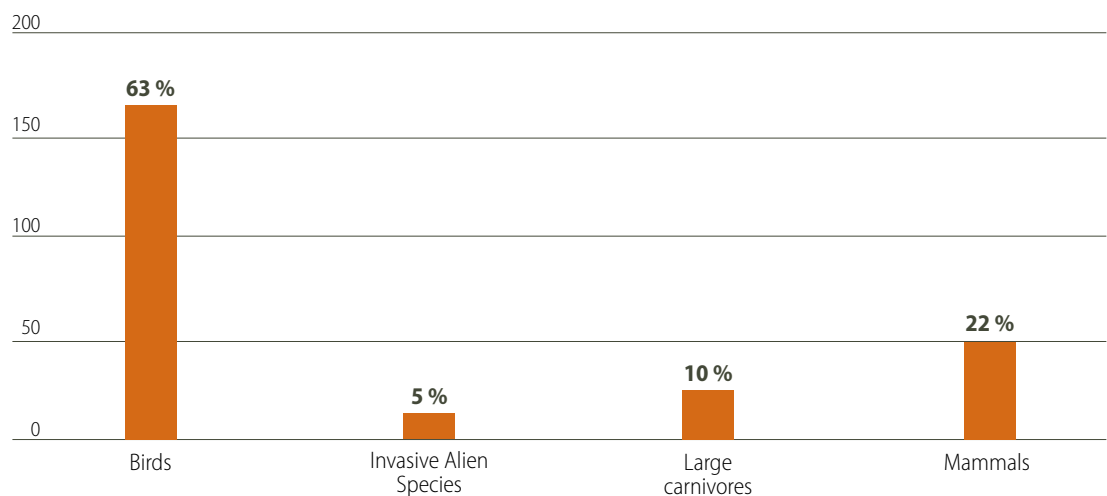


Figure 5. Types of species engaged within BDM projects.

Of the 581 BDM projects, 60% are focused on species conservation. This high percentage is understandable as hunters are actively involved in conserving and managing a variety of species – typically referred to as 'wildlife management'.

Overall, most of the projects are focussing on bird species (63%), then mammals (22%) and large carnivores (10%), followed by hunter's work on managing Invasive Alien Species (5%).

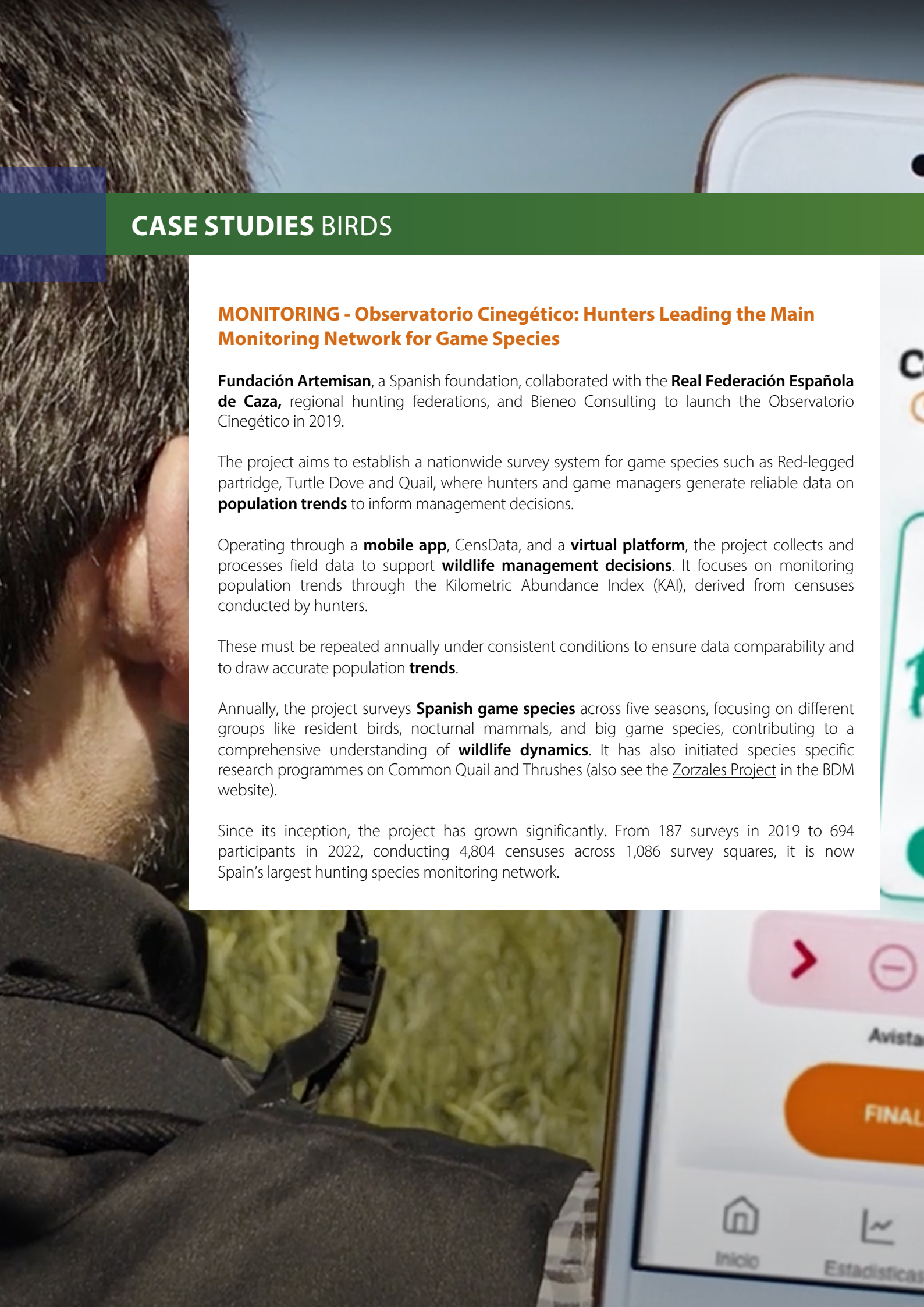
2.1 BIRDS

These management projects can involve various approaches to bird conservation that range from re-establishing or managing species, such as the **Grey Partridge** (*Perdix perdix*), and habitat management, to tackling illegal killing of birds or controlling generalist predators like the **Red Fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*) where required.

Indeed, many BDM projects that are focused on the conservation of ground-nesting birds also involve predator management.

Similarly, most species conservation/management projects involve some form of monitoring. For example, see below the case study on the Spanish hunting observatory.





CASE STUDIES BIRDS

MONITORING - Observatorio Cinegético: Hunters Leading the Main Monitoring Network for Game Species

Fundación Artemisan, a Spanish foundation, collaborated with the **Real Federación Española de Caza**, regional hunting federations, and Bieneo Consulting to launch the Observatorio Cinegético in 2019.

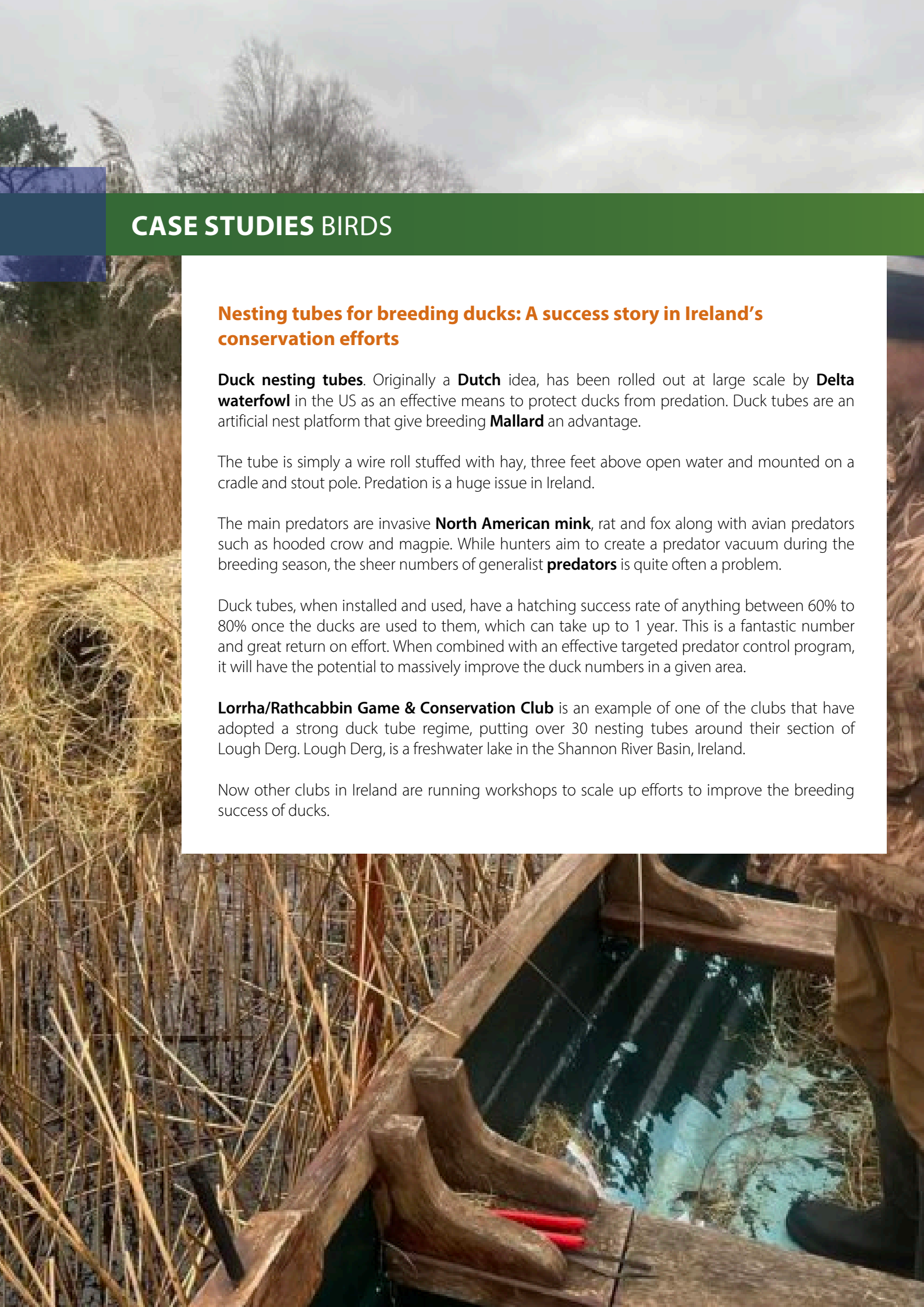
The project aims to establish a nationwide survey system for game species such as Red-legged partridge, Turtle Dove and Quail, where hunters and game managers generate reliable data on **population trends** to inform management decisions.

Operating through a **mobile app**, CensData, and a **virtual platform**, the project collects and processes field data to support **wildlife management decisions**. It focuses on monitoring population trends through the Kilometric Abundance Index (KAI), derived from censuses conducted by hunters.

These must be repeated annually under consistent conditions to ensure data comparability and to draw accurate population **trends**.

Annually, the project surveys **Spanish game species** across five seasons, focusing on different groups like resident birds, nocturnal mammals, and big game species, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of **wildlife dynamics**. It has also initiated species specific research programmes on Common Quail and Thrushes (also see the [Zorzales Project](#) in the BDM website).

Since its inception, the project has grown significantly. From 187 surveys in 2019 to 694 participants in 2022, conducting 4,804 censuses across 1,086 survey squares, it is now Spain's largest hunting species monitoring network.



CASE STUDIES BIRDS

Nesting tubes for breeding ducks: A success story in Ireland's conservation efforts

Duck nesting tubes. Originally a **Dutch** idea, has been rolled out at large scale by **Delta waterfowl** in the US as an effective means to protect ducks from predation. Duck tubes are an artificial nest platform that give breeding **Mallard** an advantage.

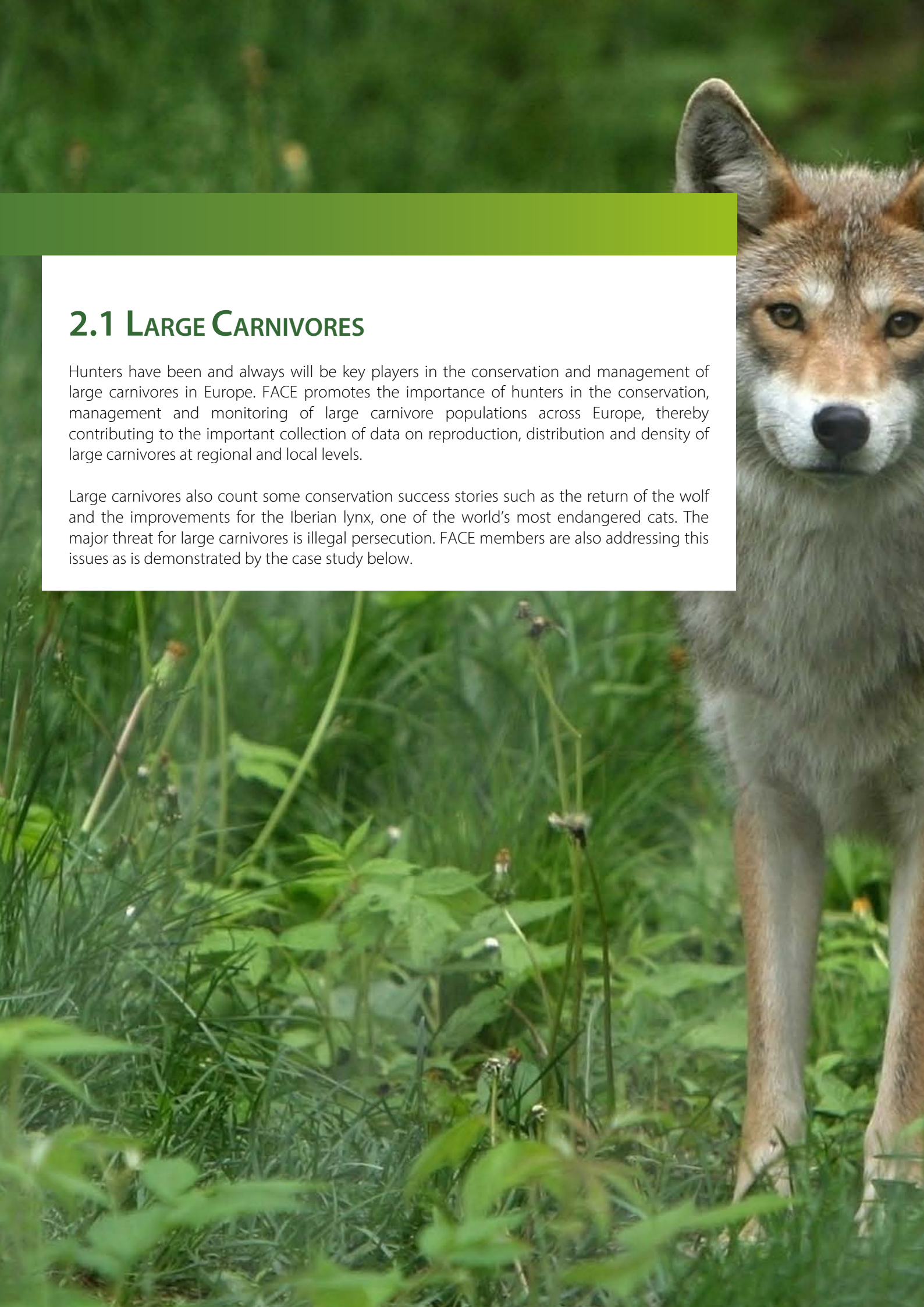
The tube is simply a wire roll stuffed with hay, three feet above open water and mounted on a cradle and stout pole. Predation is a huge issue in Ireland.

The main predators are invasive **North American mink**, rat and fox along with avian predators such as hooded crow and magpie. While hunters aim to create a predator vacuum during the breeding season, the sheer numbers of generalist **predators** is quite often a problem.

Duck tubes, when installed and used, have a hatching success rate of anything between 60% to 80% once the ducks are used to them, which can take up to 1 year. This is a fantastic number and great return on effort. When combined with an effective targeted predator control program, it will have the potential to massively improve the duck numbers in a given area.

Lorrha/Rathcabbin Game & Conservation Club is an example of one of the clubs that have adopted a strong duck tube regime, putting over 30 nesting tubes around their section of Lough Derg. Lough Derg, is a freshwater lake in the Shannon River Basin, Ireland.

Now other clubs in Ireland are running workshops to scale up efforts to improve the breeding success of ducks.

A photograph of a wolf standing in a field of green plants. The wolf is looking directly at the camera. The background is a soft-focus green field. A green horizontal bar is positioned above the text area.

2.1 LARGE CARNIVORES

Hunters have been and always will be key players in the conservation and management of large carnivores in Europe. FACE promotes the importance of hunters in the conservation, management and monitoring of large carnivore populations across Europe, thereby contributing to the important collection of data on reproduction, distribution and density of large carnivores at regional and local levels.

Large carnivores also count some conservation success stories such as the return of the wolf and the improvements for the Iberian lynx, one of the world's most endangered cats. The major threat for large carnivores is illegal persecution. FACE members are also addressing this issues as is demonstrated by the case study below.

CASE STUDY LARGE CARNIVORES

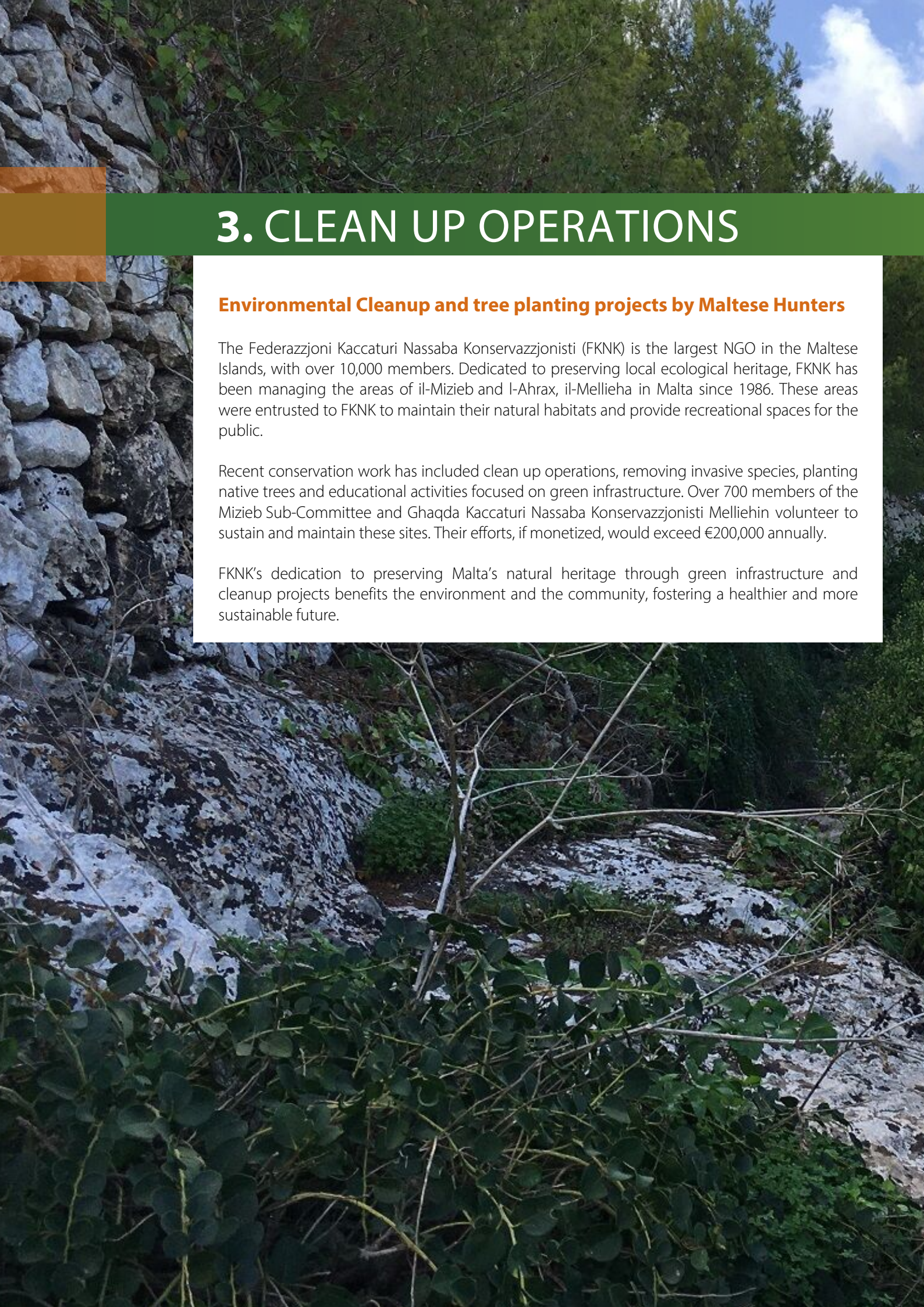
Spanish Hunters fight in Court against Wildlife Crime

At a time when preserving biodiversity and protecting endangered species are European goals, hunters play a pivotal role in nature conservation, particularly in the recovery and active management of large carnivore species like the **Iberian lynx** (*Lynx pardinus*).

However, these efforts can be jeopardized by poaching activities. Therefore, it's crucial to align nature conservation field actions with the fight against wildlife crime. Aligned with these thoughts, the **Murcia Hunting Federation** and the **Artemisan Foundation** have joined as plaintiffs in a legal case against an individual accused of killing an Iberian lynx last August in Lorca, Murcia. Both organizations strongly condemn the incident.

It worth emphasizing that the note that the current population exceeds **1,600 individuals** in the Iberian Peninsula, **with nine out of ten lynxes** successfully preserved within hunting estates benefiting from conservation efforts.





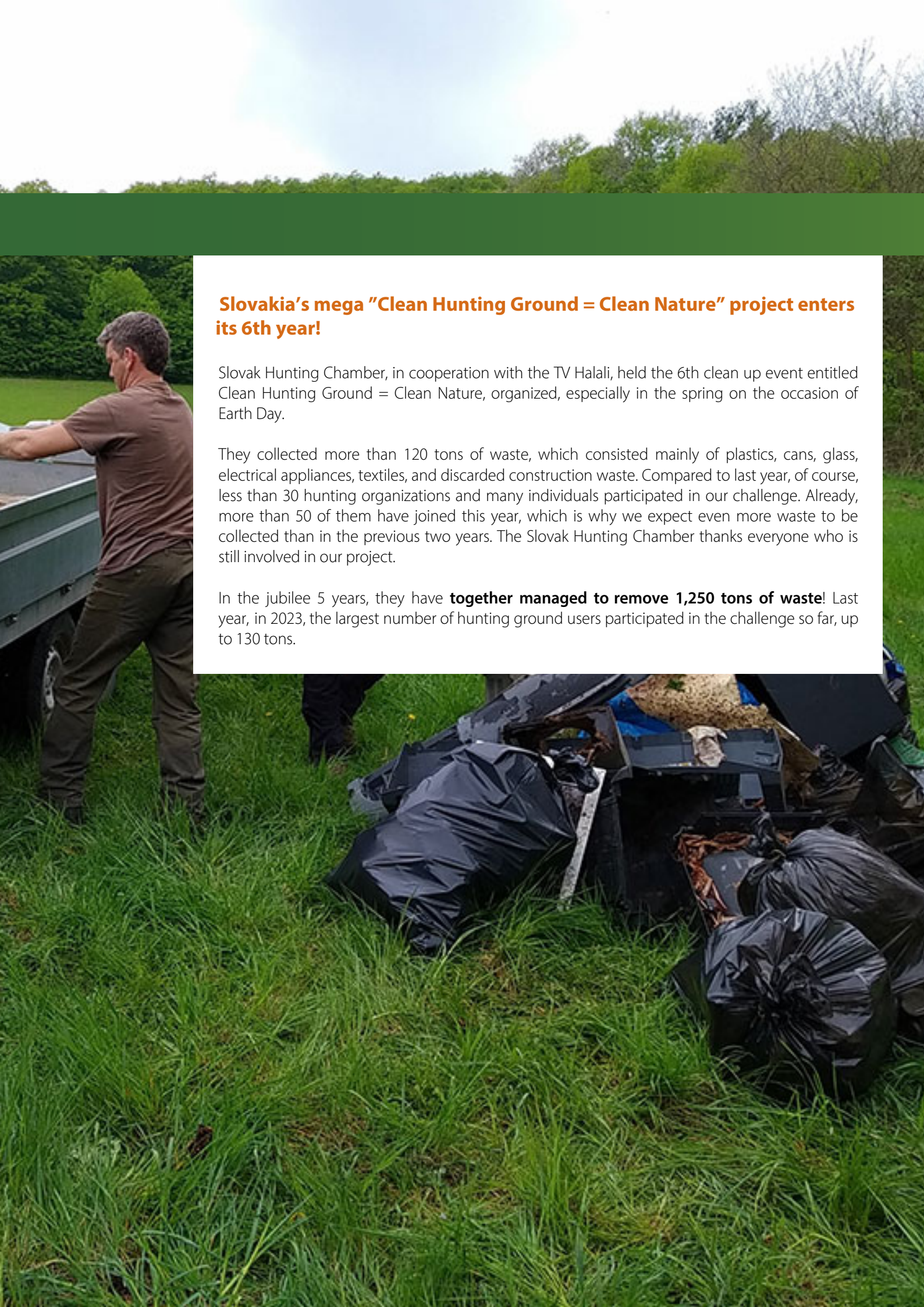
3. CLEAN UP OPERATIONS

Environmental Cleanup and tree planting projects by Maltese Hunters

The Federazzjoni Kaccaturi Nassaba Konservazzjonisti (FKNK) is the largest NGO in the Maltese Islands, with over 10,000 members. Dedicated to preserving local ecological heritage, FKNK has been managing the areas of il-Mizieb and l-Ahrax, il-Mellieha in Malta since 1986. These areas were entrusted to FKNK to maintain their natural habitats and provide recreational spaces for the public.

Recent conservation work has included clean up operations, removing invasive species, planting native trees and educational activities focused on green infrastructure. Over 700 members of the Mizieb Sub-Committee and Ghaqda Kaccaturi Nassaba Konservazzjonisti Melliehin volunteer to sustain and maintain these sites. Their efforts, if monetized, would exceed €200,000 annually.

FKNK's dedication to preserving Malta's natural heritage through green infrastructure and cleanup projects benefits the environment and the community, fostering a healthier and more sustainable future.

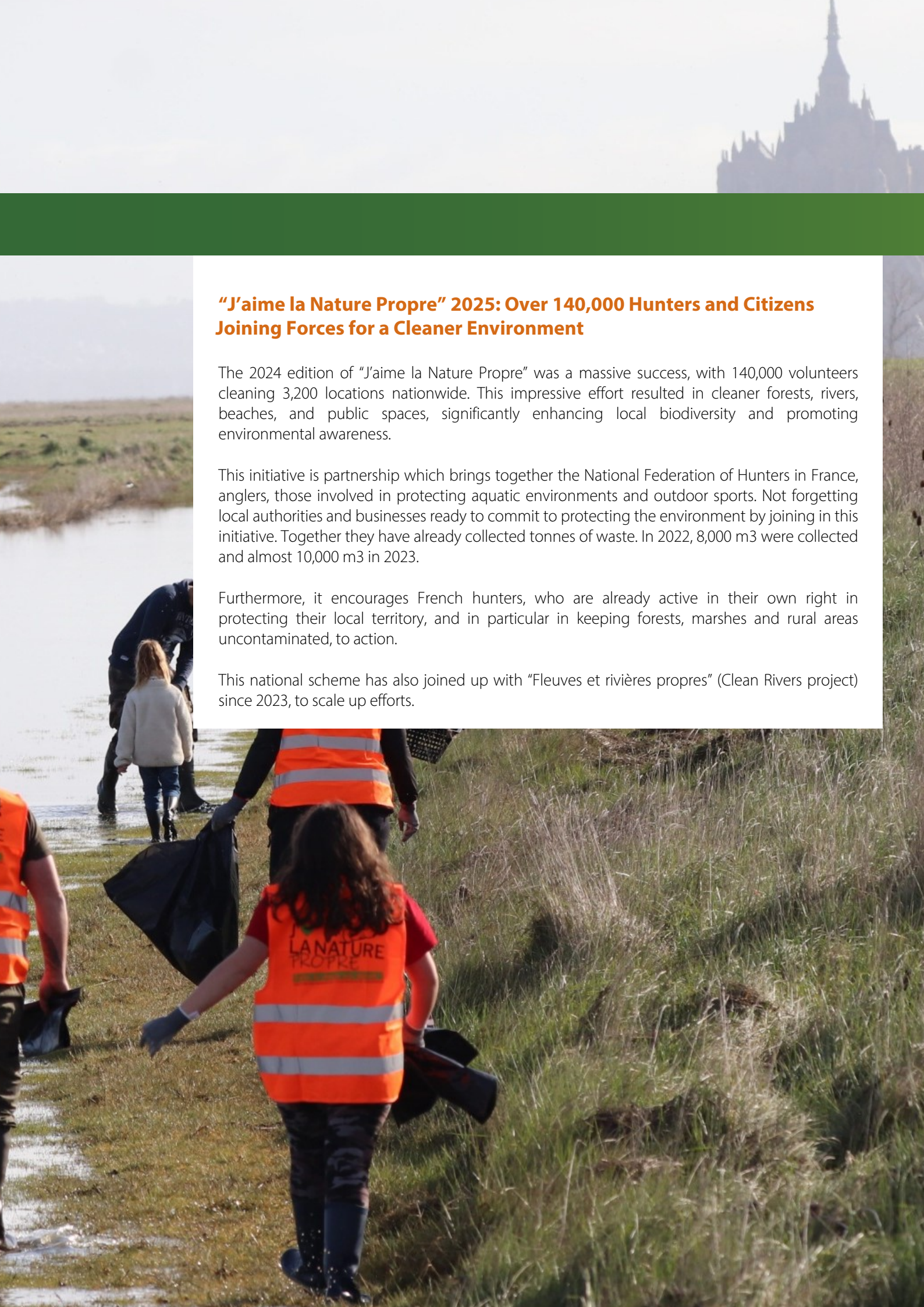


Slovakia's mega "Clean Hunting Ground = Clean Nature" project enters its 6th year!

Slovak Hunting Chamber, in cooperation with the TV Halali, held the 6th clean up event entitled Clean Hunting Ground = Clean Nature, organized, especially in the spring on the occasion of Earth Day.

They collected more than 120 tons of waste, which consisted mainly of plastics, cans, glass, electrical appliances, textiles, and discarded construction waste. Compared to last year, of course, less than 30 hunting organizations and many individuals participated in our challenge. Already, more than 50 of them have joined this year, which is why we expect even more waste to be collected than in the previous two years. The Slovak Hunting Chamber thanks everyone who is still involved in our project.

In the jubilee 5 years, they have **together managed to remove 1,250 tons of waste!** Last year, in 2023, the largest number of hunting ground users participated in the challenge so far, up to 130 tons.



“J’aime la Nature Propre” 2025: Over 140,000 Hunters and Citizens Joining Forces for a Cleaner Environment

The 2024 edition of “J’aime la Nature Propre” was a massive success, with 140,000 volunteers cleaning 3,200 locations nationwide. This impressive effort resulted in cleaner forests, rivers, beaches, and public spaces, significantly enhancing local biodiversity and promoting environmental awareness.

This initiative is partnership which brings together the National Federation of Hunters in France, anglers, those involved in protecting aquatic environments and outdoor sports. Not forgetting local authorities and businesses ready to commit to protecting the environment by joining in this initiative. Together they have already collected tonnes of waste. In 2022, 8,000 m3 were collected and almost 10,000 m3 in 2023.

Furthermore, it encourages French hunters, who are already active in their own right in protecting their local territory, and in particular in keeping forests, marshes and rural areas uncontaminated, to action.

This national scheme has also joined up with “Fleuves et rivières propres” (Clean Rivers project) since 2023, to scale up efforts.



WHAT'S NEXT?

The 10th Report of the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto shows the diversity of work undertaken by hunters to benefit nature restoration. The initiatives differ in terms of their size, target, location, type of action and duration but each of them shows that hunters are actively engaged in biodiversity conservation in Europe.

This report shows that hunters, in conjunction with a large group of stakeholders (public authorities, environmental NGOs, research bodies, landowners, farmers, foresters, institutions), are active in the nature restoration and conservation of a wide range of habitats and species in Europe. Most of the 581 case studies include actions engaging wetland and farmland habitats. These results are unsurprising given the decline of species due to the intensification of agriculture linked to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). All the projects captured in the BDM demonstrate hunters' commitment to contribute to EU nature policy goals, which ambitiously aim to prevent biodiversity loss by 2030.

Contributing to nature restoration:

The evidence presented in this report shows that 260 projects contribute to habitat restoration. Habitat restoration measures are important tools to fight biodiversity loss, climate change and further ecosystem degradation. Rural stakeholders such as hunters hold a lot of knowledge about local flora, fauna and ecosystems to guide and support restoration practices as demonstrated by the case studies in this report. Hunters input will be key in the development and implementation of national Restoration Plans.

FACE's recommendations for the new EU Nature Restoration Law in light of the evidence presented in this report:

- FACE stresses that a strategic framework for the restoration of habitats and ecosystems requires priorities at sub-national level and the involvement of regional and local authorities as well as key stakeholders from an early stage in the planning process.
- As restoration requires a landscape-level approach, the role of stakeholders, including farmers, land managers and hunters, is key to develop workable and lasting conservation measures.
- As much restoration will take place on private land, the right incentives to promote community-based conservation must be provided to increase local acceptance and support by relevant stakeholders to make sure that restoration projects become success stories.
- To ensure that the EU Restoration Law can translate into successful local initiatives on the ground, it is important to recognise the contribution of hunters to the conservation of nature, including the restoration of habitats (e.g. creation and maintenance of wetlands and other natural features in the wider landscape).
- Enabling transformative change requires doing things differently. FACE requests the European Commission to give greater priority to tackling the major drivers of biodiversity loss and land degradation in a way that incentivises key stakeholders.



Visit the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto website to have access at the 581 hunters' projects and many other documents:

www.biodiversitymanifesto.com



For more information on the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto and its results please contact info@face.eu

FACE
Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée 1-5
B-1040 Brussels