



Strasbourg, 25 August 2014
[files10e_2014.doc]

T-PVS/Files (2014) 10

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

34th meeting
Strasbourg, 2-5 December 2014

Complaint on stand-by

**Presumed impact of a construction of Overhead
Power Line (OHL) in an environmentally
sensitive area in the Lithuanian-Polish
borderland**

REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT

*Document prepared by
the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania*



**LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS APLINKOS MINISTERIJA
THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

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Secretariat of the Bern Convention
Council of Europe
Biodiversity Unit
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

August 2014 No. (45-1)-D8-

**REGARDING COMPLAINT NO.2013/5: PRESUMED IMPACT OF A
CONSTRUCTION OF OVERHEAD POWER LINE (OHL) IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY
SENSITIVE AREA IN THE LITHUANIAN – POLISH BORDERLAND**

In response to the letter of the Secretariat of the Bern Convention of 29th April 2014, regarding Complaint No. 2013/5, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania provides the following information on the construction of the 400 kV international energy interconnection LitPol Link Overhead Power Line (OHL) from the Alytus transformer substation to the state border with the Republic of Poland, the performed additional survey on the presence of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) in the respective territory, and other important information, related to the protection of the European pond turtle.

Pursuant to the recommendation of the Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, a further field monitoring survey (biodiversity supervision) was carried out in order to look into the endangered species of animals, i.e. European pond turtles. The survey proves that European pond turtles (*Emys orbicularis*) do not live and breed in the surveyed territories, where the OHL is planned to be constructed. No individuals or nesting sites of the European pond turtle were found along the route. The said conclusions correspond to those, provided in the Environmental Impact Assessment (hereinafter – EIA) Report, approved at the end of 2010.

1. The results of searching for European pond turtles (*Emys orbicularis*) and their habitats along the route of the 400 kV overhead power transmission line from Alytus to the state border with the Republic of Poland.

From 20th May until 20th July 2014, ecology monitoring specialists from Lithuanian Fund for Nature¹ Mr. Žydrūnas Sinkevičius and Mr. Edmundas Greimas, carried out a survey, aimed at identifying potential presence of the European pond turtle along the route of the constructed OHL.

The location of survey. The survey was carried out in the section of the OHL territory in the Lazdijai district municipality along the route: Filicijonavas – Galiniai – Burbiškiai – Šadžiūnai – Žemaitkiemis – Kasteletišké – Švedakampis – Skaistučiai. The section of the route from Skaistučiai village to Alytus is characterized by agricultural fields, irrigated meadows and other types of landscape, not suitable for turtles to live and breed, therefore, this part of the route was inspected visually, without going into deep examination.

Short description of the survey methodology. In the territory under survey, ponds and swamps, potentially suitable for the European pond turtle, were inspected. When examining possible habitats, attention was drawn to watersides of the said bodies of water, vegetation and objects above

¹ Lithuanian Fund for Nature is a non-governmental organization, which actively engages in the conservation of nature and wildlife, www.glis.lt

water surface (trees, stones, larger humps of vegetation and sludge isles), since pond turtles tend to stay in sunlit locations. The watersides and objects were surveyed from a chosen position from 6 a.m. until 12 a.m. using binoculars with 10x magnifying power. Each selected object was surveyed for a time period no shorter than 1.5 hrs.

Upon evaluating the locations, suitable for existence of pond turtles, additionally, metal traps with bait were placed. The traps were kept from 6th to 30th June 2014, and were checked once a day.

The locations suitable for laying eggs were surveyed from 20th May until 1st July 2014. Daily, from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. visual inspections along the routes were performed using binoculars with 10x magnifying power.

Summary of the results of survey and conclusions. Upon evaluation of the results of the survey, it can be stated that no European pond turtles (*Emys orbicularis*) were found in the territory, where the OHL is planned to be constructed. Also, no nesting-sites of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) were found along the route. The full report of the survey is provided as Annex No. 1.

The results of the survey coincide with the conclusions of the EIA Report, which was approved at the end of 2010. The copy of the Report was sent to the Secretariat of the Bern Convention with the letter of the Ministry of Environment of 4th September 2013, No. (11-1)-D8-7387.

It is important to note that territories, where known and inventoried populations of the European pond turtle in Lithuania breed (ref. map, Annex No. 2), do not overlap with the OHL route. The distance between them is big enough for the pond turtles to stay untouched by the construction works.

The OHL route stretches for 51 km from Alytus to the state border with the Republic of Poland. Only a small section of the route passes through a territory in Lazdijai district near shallow bogs and ponds and along natural meadows. This territory requires special monitoring and protection measures in order to minimize the possible negative effects, which may be caused by the permitted activities. Considering this, an additional survey was performed in order to check once again the potential presence of the European pond turtle. The largest part of the OHL route passes through arable fields and pastures that are not suitable for pond turtles.

The construction works of the OHL have started from the Alytus substation (Alytus district), where the landscape is dominated by agricultural fields, irrigated meadows and other types of landscape, not suitable for turtles to live and breed. The construction works in Lazdijai district (i.e. the sensitive area, as claimed by the Association of Rudamina Community) are due to start in October 2014, as it is foreseen in the Works Schedule (Annex No. 3). By that time, the survey is completed. Moreover, by October, the period of normal activity of pond turtles is over and they are preparing for hibernation. Even if pond turtles would have been found along the OHL route in potentially suitable locations, the construction works would not have interfered with the additional field survey or made negative impact to the pond turtles or their habitats.

It is important to note, that ecological supervision of the project is being performed on a regular basis. Comprehensive information on the measures taken is described in part 2 of this letter.

2. The scope of the performed environmental supervision.

In the territory of Lithuania 150 supports for the OHL are going to be installed. During the construction of foundations for each support and while installing the supports, prior to and while performing the works, experts of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature perform environmental supervision along the entire route of the OHL. Their regular visits are being recorded and their findings documented. Environmental supervision guarantees that the current OHL design solutions will be implemented in line with the highest safety requirements for the protected species, should there be any detected during the construction activities. At present, experts of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature are preparing a report and recommendations on how and where the works should be commenced in order to avoid negative impact for all animal species and their habitats. The report will be provided to the contractor for construction works Ilc. Žilinskis Co.

It should be noted that Lithuanian Fund for Nature is engaged in the process of environmental supervision of the project implementation activities, following Alytus Regional Environmental Protection Department of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter –

Alytus REPD) decision on EIA Report and request during the Technical design documentation approval process and while obtaining Building permit. The detailed scope of works to be performed by Lithuanian Fund for Nature (ref. Annex No. 4) is included in the contract signed between Lithuanian Fund for Nature and construction contractor llc. Žilinskis Co.

Despite the probability is very low, should even a single pond turtle hatchery be found, it will be cordoned off and the eggs will be protected not only from passing construction vehicles but also from birds of prey and predators that often attack turtle nests.

As mentioned above, the supervision of flora and fauna along the route of the OHL is performed prior to commencing any construction works and will be continued until the full completion of the project.

3. Participation of representatives of Rudamina community of Lazdijai district in surveys of European pond turtles.

The Ministry of Environment in its letter of 2 July 2014 No. (45-1)-D8-4978 (Annex No. 5) applied to the Rudamina community of Lazdijai district with a suggestion to contact Lithuanian Fund for Nature in order to jointly participate in searches for potential localities of pond turtles in the territory, mentioned in the Complaint No. 2013/5. Lithuanian Fund for Nature repeatedly applied (on 16 July 2014 by telephone, and on 08 August 2014 by letter, ref. Annex No. 7) to representatives of the community Mr. R. Valiokas and Ms. R. Cimakauskienė regarding participation in the survey, however, they did not express a wish to join. A copy of the letter of Rudamina community of 21 July 2014 is attached as Annex No. 6.

In the letter of 08 August 2014, Lithuanian Fund for Nature invited representatives of Rudamina community to attend a meeting with representatives of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Alytus REPD and LITGRID AB in order to discuss issues, related to searching for species of flora and fauna, protected by the Bern Convention, along the route of the OHL. The meeting was held nearby Rudamina Manor, at Karaliaus Mindaugo str. 39, Rudamina, Lazdijai Eldership, Lazdijai District Municipality (minutes of the meeting are attached as Annex No. 8). Representatives of Rudamina community did not come to the meeting and did not express their wish to participate in the survey in any other way.

Responding to the invitation of 08-08-2014 to arrange a meeting, representatives of Rudamina community in their letter of 13-08-2014 (Annex 12) expressed only regret that they did not get the research plan. By the letter of 18-08-2014 (Annex 11) the Lithuanian Fund for Nature invited again the representatives of Rudamina community to meet from 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. at any of the three locations indicated in the letter to survey the area and search for the European pond turtle. Representatives of Rudamina community did not arrive in any of the indicated locations.

Until the sending this letter to the Secretariat of the Bern Convention, representatives of Rudamina community neither by phone nor by letter expressed a wish to participate in research of European pond turtle and did not arrive to the meetings proposed by the Lithuanian Fund for Nature.

4. Regarding the actions of representatives of Rudamina community of Lazdijai district.

Ministry of Environment would like to draw the attention of the Secretariat of the Bern Convention that a representative of Rudamina community Association Mr. Ramūnas Valiokas, on 2 May 2014 published an appeal in the information portal of Lazdijai district (www.lazdijuzvaigzde.lt) and induced local residents to assist him in finding and identifying habitats of European pond turtles (the text of the appeal is provided as Annex No. 9). People were asked to provide pond turtles with a temporary shelter until the representatives of Rudamina community would come to collect them. According to the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania, i.e. the Order on Use of Protected Species, it is strictly prohibited to take any protected species from their natural environment. The species can be taken only in case the person has a licence, issued by the Environmental Protection Agency and only for the purposes, established in the Order on Use of Protected Species, i.e. for the purposes, stated in Article 9 of the Bern Convention and in paragraph 1 of Article 16 of the Habitats Directive. Thus,

local residents were induced to violate legal acts and take illegal actions. This could have had a negative effect on the population of the species and potentially misrepresent the information on the locations of occurrence of pond turtles.

In order to respond to such illegal initiative, Ministry of Environment on 14 May 2014 published a message on its webpage (Annex No. 10) requesting people not to follow the initiatives and informing that such actions can have negative impacts on nature and especially on endangered species.

5. Other information on spread and protection of European pond turtles in Lithuania.

The species is included into the List of Protected Animal, Plant and Fungi Species as an endangered species – Category 1 (E), the species is also included into the List of strictly protected species. In the beginning of the 20th century the European pond turtles were more widely spread in Lithuania, however, as a result of intensive human activities (arable farming, irrigation, contamination) they become extinct in majority of previous locations.

The issue of conservation of the European pond turtle was raised in 1976. The pond turtles were included into the Lithuanian Data Red Book and three State reserves were established for their protection in Lazdijai district: in the areas of Kuciuliškės, Stračiūnai and Juodabalė.

At present only sparse and non-numerous populations of pond turtles are found in the Southern part of the country: in Lazdijai, Varėna, Druskininkai and Alytus districts (ref. map, Annex No. 2).

Today Lithuania is on the northernmost range limit of the species. The turtles are found only in the Southern part of the country in the areas least damaged by irrigation. The population of pond turtles is decreasing due to the lack of proper habitats – the non-grazed sandy slopes overgrown by small pines, ponds – by willows and large areas of territories, not suitable for the turtles, separate one habitat from another. In addition, predators, such as foxes and raccoon dogs, also have a significant negative impact as they eat the turtles' eggs.

Lithuania has taken each and every possible measure for conservation of the species within the limits of its natural range in the Southern part of the country in the areas least damaged by irrigation. The majority of habitats have been designated as *Sites of Community Importance* and particular attention is paid for species conservation. 7 sites of the Natura 2000 network have been designated for conservation of the species.

Additionally, the Ministry of Environment would like to inform the Secretariat of Bern Convention, that 2 new sites for Pond turtle will be included in the List of Potential Sites of Community Importance according to the data of Life+Nature Project “Development of a Pilot Ecological Network through Nature Frame areas in South Lithuania”.

6. The implemented measures for conservation of the European pond turtle and other rare species.

In 2010-2014 Life+Nature Project, “Development of a Pilot Ecological Network through Nature Frame areas in South Lithuania”, funded by the LIFE+ programme and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, aimed at conservation of rare and endangered species and their habitats and improving their conservation status, is being implemented in Lithuania. The project is implemented in the Southern part of the country – in the territories, adjacent to the sites of construction of the OHL. The project is being implemented by the Lithuanian Fund for Nature.

The project encompasses three major types of activities: protection of target species and restoration of their habitats, creation of an ecological network, and education of local communities. The target species of the project are the reptilian and amphibian species, listed in Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive, i.e. the Pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*), Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*), European green toad (*B. viridis*), the Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), Moor frog (*Rana arvalis*), Pool frog (*R. lessonae*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and a significant number of birds and invertebrate species, requiring small ponds of still water, small meadows and non-overgrown sandy slopes.

A whole range of conservation actions were foreseen for the target species, including digging of ponds, the preparation and surveillance of sites for turtles to lay eggs, collection of eggs laid in sites considered unsafe, raising juveniles, releasing them back to the natural environment, breeding tree frogs or collecting their eggs and raising of their juveniles, strengthening the sustainable nature friendly farming, etc. The said actions are carried out in order to create ecological corridors for the target species between the protected territories.

During the project 164 ponds were dug, with the total area of 151 130 m². 40 places, suitable for Pond turtles to lay eggs, were arranged. Also, 52 habitats for the project's target species were restored. In addition, employees of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature, the Regional Parks of Meteliai and Veisiejai, and the National Park of Dzūkija collected eggs from unsafe places (mostly from roadsides) and hatched 128 offspring turtles in the Lithuanian Zoo and set them free into the suitable habitats in the Southern Lithuania. Measures were taken to protect the turtles' eggs against the predators (foxes, raccoon dogs) that have a significant adverse effect on the pond turtles – they eat their eggs. 88 egg hatches were preserved during the project.

For more information on the project please visit <http://www.glis.lt/ekotinklas/index.php/en/>.

During the period of 2005 – 2009 Lithuanian Fund for Nature implemented the joint international project Protection of *Emys orbicularis* and amphibians in the North European lowlands (NELEAP) LIFE Project No. LIFE05NAT/LT/000094 (2005 - 2009). The project was implemented in cooperation with German, Polish and Lithuanian environmental protection organizations. During the project in the Southern Lithuania different environmental protection measures were implemented for the purpose of conservation of endangered populations of Pond turtles and rare amphibians – Great crested newts and Fire bellied toads and for improving the environmental conditions for survival of the target species. Old ponds were restored and new ponds were dug, nesting areas for turtles improved and new created, hibernation places for Pond turtles and amphibians were created as well as other measures, improving the state of populations of Pond turtles and rare amphibians, were implemented.

For more information about the project please visit <http://www.glis.lt/life/>.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Annex No. 1. Report of the survey, carried out by the Lithuanian Fund for Nature “The results of the search for European pond turtles (*Emys orbicularis*) and their habitats along the route of the 400 kV overhead power transmission line from Alytus to the state border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland“ with annexes;
2. Annex No. 2. Map, showing the natural spread territory of the European pond turtle in the Southern Lithuania and the power transmission line, planned to be constructed;
3. Annex No. 3. Time schedule for performance of works on construction of the 400 kV overhead power transmission line Alytus-LT/PL border;
4. Annex No. 4. Proposal of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature to llc. Žilinskis Co regarding the scope of environmental supervision;
5. Annex No. 5. Letter of the Ministry of Environment to the Rudamina Community of 02-07-2014;
6. Annex No. 6. Letter of representatives of the Rudamina community to the Lithuanian Fund for Nature of 21-07-2014;
7. Annex No. 7. Letter of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature to the Rudamina Community of 08-08-2014;
8. Annex No. 8. Minutes of meeting of 14-08-2014;
9. Annex No. 9. Article in www.lazdijuzvaigzde.lt by the representative of the Rudamina community of Lazdijai district Ramūnas Valiokas.
10. Annex No. 10. Announcement of the Ministry of Environment of 15-05-2014 on preservation of pond turtles, published at the webpage of the Ministry of Environment at www.am.lt;
11. Annex No. 11. Letter of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature of 18-08-2014 to the Rudamina community, urging to participate in the search for pond turtles;
12. Letter of representatives of the Rudamina community to the Lithuanian Fund for Nature of 13-08-2014.

Viceminister

Linas Jonauskas

/Logo: Lithuanian Fund for Nature/

Results of the search for European pond turtles (*Emys orbicularis*) and their habitats along the route of the 400 kV overhead power transmission line from Alytus to the state border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland

The survey was performed by: Ž. Sinkevičius
E. Greimas



2014
Vilnius

Introduction

The European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis* L.) is geographically widely spread throughout Europe however it has been becoming extinct in the larger part of its habitat. The species is included into the red books of endangered species of most European countries. In Lithuania the species is included into the Red Book as an especially endangered species of Category 1 (E). In addition, the European pond turtle is protected according to the Bern Convention (Category II) and Washington (CITES) Convention (Category II).

In the beginning of the 20th century the pond turtles were more widely spread in Lithuania however, as the result of intensive human activities (arable farming, irrigation and contamination), they have become extinct in most locations.

The issue of preservation of the European pond turtle was raised in 1976. The pond turtles were included into the Lithuanian Red Book of endangered species and three national preservation areas were established for their protection in Lazdijai district: in the areas of Kuciuliškės, Stračiūnai and Juodabalė.

At present only sparse populations of pond turtles are found in the Southern part of the country: in Lazdijai, Varėna, Druskininkai and Alytus districts.

The most important locations of occurrence of the European pond turtle: in Lazdijai district - Kuciuliškių State Nature Reserve, Drapaliai, Juodabalė State Nature Reserve, Vainiūnai quarry, Živilčiai, Zervyna lake, Bestraigiškės, Šlavantai and Porumbas forests, the ponds and swampy areas of

the forests around the villages of Klepočiai, Čivonys and Petroškai. In other known localities only single individuals of the pond turtles have been observed.

The aim of the survey: to identify the presence of European pond turtles along the route of the constructed 400 kV overhead power transmission line from Alytus to the state border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland.

Subject of the survey

The subject of the survey is the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*), the species, endangered and protected in Lithuania, included into the Red Book of endangered species as a very rare species of Category I. In addition, the European pond turtle is protected by the Bern Convention (Category II) and CITES (Category II).

Time of the survey: the survey was performed during the time period from 20 May till 20 July 2014.

Location of the survey: the section of the constructed 400 kV overhead power transmission line in the Lazdijai district municipality along the route: Filicijonavas – Galiniai – Burbiškiai – Šadžiūnai – Žemaitkiemis – Kasteletišké – Švedakampis – Skaistučiai. The section of the route to the East of Skaistučiai characterizes with agricultural fields, irrigated meadows and other types of landscape, where turtles do not live and do not breed therefore the remaining part of the route from Skaistučiai village to Alytus was inspected only visually without dedicating additional attempts to a more thorough examination.

Survey methodology. On the territory under survey the ponds, potentially suitable for the European pond turtle, were inspected. When examining the habitats attention was drawn to the slopes of shores of the said bodies of water as well as their vegetation, since pond turtles tend to accommodate and get warm in well sunlit locations. The largest attention was dedicated to the spots, elevated above the water surface, where pond turtles like to get up to get warm: trees, which have fell into the water, rocks, elevated above the water surface, larger humps of vegetation or sludge isles. The shores and spots, where pond turtles might go to get warm were surveyed from the chosen spot from 06.00 till 12.00 by using 10 times zooming binoculars. Each selected spot was surveyed for a time period no shorter than 1.5 hrs.

Upon evaluating the locations, suitable for pond turtles to accommodate and feed, metallic traps with baits were placed. The traps stayed from 6 to 30 June, 2014 and were checked one time per day.

From 20 May till 1 July, 2014 the locations, suitable for laying eggs by female pond turtles were surveyed. The survey was performed by going along the routes from 18.00 till 21.00 by using 10 times zooming binoculars and by visually inspecting the chosen locations.

The results of survey and conclusions. Upon evaluating the results of survey, it can be stated that no European pond turtles (*Emys orbicularis*) were found in the surveyed territories of the 400 kV overhead power transmission line from the Alytus transformer substation to the state border between the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland, planned to be constructed. Also no egg-laying locations of the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) were found along the route.

During the survey no construction works were commenced in the places of supports of the overhead power line in Lazdijai district, i.e. in the known potential locations of occurrence of the European pond turtle. Only the works on construction of foundations for the supports were commenced in Alytus district along the route of the power line, however, the works were not performed near the potential habitats of the European pond turtle in Lazdijai district therefore the works did not interfere with and did not affect the results of the survey.

**THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
LITHUANIA**

State Budget Institution, A. Jakšto g. 4/9, LT-01105 Vilnius,
Tel.: (8-5) 266 3661, Fax: (8-5) 266 3663, e-mail: info@am.lt, <http://www.am.lt>.
The data are stored in the Register of Legal Entities, Registration No. 188602370

TO: The Community of Rudamina, Lazdijai District
D8-4908
Rudamina, LT-67401 Lazdijai,

DATE: 02-07-2014 No.(45-1)-

TO: Mr. Ramūnas Valiokas
Būklės 2, LT-21103 Trakai

RE.: SEARCH FOR POND TURTLES' HABITATS

On 9 April 2014 the Ministry of Environment received the letter from Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (hereinafter referred to as the Bern Convention) as regards your complaint No. 2013/5 on the potential adverse effect to the environment from the construction of the power transmission line in the Lithuanian – Polish border zone. The letter states a request to provide a possibility to your representative to participate in the survey of the territory as regards searching for potential pond turtles' habitats.

Ministry of Environment is informed that the contractor for works on constructing the power link between Lithuania and Poland "LitPol Link" has concluded the agreement with the Lithuanian Fund for Nature for provision of ecology expert services during the implementation of the project. We suggest that your representatives get in touch with the Lithuanian Fund for Nature as regards the participation when searching for potential pond turtles' habitats on the territory, mentioned in your complaint.

The contact data of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature:

Algirdo g. 22-3, LT-03218 Vilnius

Tel.: 8 5 2310700, Fax: 8 5 2310441

e-mail: info@glis.lt

Executive Director

Edmundas Greimas (mob. tel.: 8-698 39665)

Vice-Minister of Environment

Linus Jonauskas

*/Seal: DOCUMENTS MANAGEMENT DIVISION, THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, THE
REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA/*

K, Klovaitė, 8-70 663 552, e-mail: k.klovaite@am.lt */signature/*

/Seal: Head of Nature Protection Division

Vilmantas Graičiūnas/

/signature/

08-07-2014

**Lithuanian
Fund
for Nature**

Charity and Sponsorship Fund
Algirdo g. 22-3, Vilnius LT-03218, Lithuania
Tel.: (8 5) 231 0700, Fax: (8 5) 231 0441
e-mail: info@glis.lt

DATE: 08-08-2014 No. LGF-14-69, to No. of 21-07-2014

Dear Ms. Cimakauskienė,

We would like to thank you for your letter of 21-07-2014.

As you have correctly noted, the Lithuanian Fund for Nature does invite the Rudamina community to join in the activities of searching for the species, protected under the Bern Convention, along the future 400 kV overhead power line.

We would also like to remind you that the Ministry of Environment (hereinafter referred to as the ME), on 02-07-2004 notified you on the possibility to join the survey of flora and fauna along the future 400 kV overhead power line and stated that if you wish to join the activities you should apply to the Lithuanian Fund for Nature at the address, stated in the letter of the Ministry of Environment. We have not received a response from you, therefore, on 16-07-2014 we contacted representative of the Rudamina community Mr. R. Valiokas by telephone and invited him to join the survey verbally. After the this conversation we received your letter of 21-07-2014.

At present we have completed a part of the survey according to the methodology, chosen by us, which is also used for the official programme of monitoring of the European pond turtle, executed by the State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment.

Herewith we provide for your attention the initial report on the methodology of survey of the European pond turtle and on the information, collected until now. In case you have any comments or remarks as regards the methodology of survey or the content of the report, we are ready to take your constructive recommendations into consideration, attempt to improve the process and verify any additional information.

In addition, we would like to notify you, that we are ready to meet representatives of the Rudamina community on 14 August of this year, at 11:00, by the Rudamina Manor (at the address Karaliaus Mindaugo g. 39, Rudamina, Lazdijai Eldership, Lazdijai District Municipality) and together discuss the issues, relating with the flora and fauna, protected under the Bern Convention, which may potentially exist along the future 400 kV overhead power line.

Kind regards;

Executive Director

/signature/

Edmundas Greimas

MINUTES OF THE MEETING WITH THE RUDAMINA COMMUNITY

The meeting was held: on 14 August 2014, 11.00 in Rudamina, Lazdijai district

Chairman: Mr. E. Greimas, Executive Director at the Lithuanian Fund for Nature

Secretary: Mr. Ž. Sinkevičius, Nature Conservation Specialist at the Lithuanian Fund for Nature

Participants: Ms. A. Bružienė, Senior Specialist at the Control Organization Division of the Alytus Regional Environmental Protection Department of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Mr. J. Rutkauskas, Senior Specialist at the Lazdijai District Agency of the Alytus Regional Environmental Protection Department of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Ms. D. Amšiejienė, Head of the Alytus Division of the Pollution Prevention and Licences Department of the Environmental Protection Agency of the Republic of Lithuania, Ms. V. Railaitė, Head of the Communication Division of Litgrid AB, Mr. Ž. Sinkevičius, Nature Conservation Specialist at the Lithuanian Fund for Nature.

Agenda:

1. Discussing the issues of location and monitoring the species, protected under the Bern Convention along the route of the constructed 400 kV power line in participation of representatives of the Rudamina community.

The Lithuanian Fund for Nature, by its Letter No. LGF-14-69 of 08-08-2014, invited representatives of the Rudamina community to meet in Rudamina on 14-08-2014, at 11.00 and together discuss the issues, relating to the flora and fauna, protected under the Bern Convention, which might potentially occur along the route of the future 400 kV power line. The invitations were sent by post and by electronic mail (to the address rudaminosbendruomene@gmail.com). The confirmations of receipt of invitations were received. No representatives of the Rudamina community arrived at the meeting. At 11.20 the Chairperson of the Rudamina community R. Cimakauskienė was called by Tel. No. +370 615 34204. R. Cimakauskienė stated that she was not going to come to the meeting.

The participants discussed the general plan of the survey to be performed by the Rudamina community and the Lithuanian Fund for Nature.

RESOLVED: to prepare the time schedule for the survey and forward it to the Rudamina community.

R. Valiokas: Let's register pond turtles' habitats

02-05-2014

I appeal to all my fellow country people in Lazdijai District and also throughout Lithuania. Now is the high season for pond turtles so help us to identify their habitats. Spread the word among your friends, young people and naturalists so that if they find some pond turtles, they would take temporary care of them till we come to collect them, and at least photograph them on location and notify me. This can be done by e-mail, sent to the address rudaminosbernduomene@gmail.com or by providing a notice to the Chairperson of the Association Rudaminos Bendruomenė Ms. Rūta Cimakauskienė or journalist Ms. Vilma Dainauskienė.

The "hot spots" of habitat of pond turtles in Lazdijai District are around Galiniai and Bielėnai, the range Karužai-Rudamina-Elveriškė-Derviniai and the wetlands of outer woods of Trakas between the villages of Beviršiai and Vingrėnai. They can also be found around Dumblys and Aukštakalniai and in the area of Palazdijai and Dyviliškiai.

In addition, on warm nights in May, one should take a listen to hear tree frogs. They can be heard about one kilometer away. Their voice sample can be found on the Internet at <http://www.minaxtarantulas.se/svenskaherptiler/amfibier/grodor/lovgroda/>.

All this is necessary for scientific research and for protection of ecological territories, in order to have proof to present to those, who want to industrialize our beautiful, unique and primordial nature.

The nature can give its proof and we have to find it and spread the word around! Let's not allow anybody to take away what nature itself has given us!

Ramūnas Valiokas, scientist, social activist.

Comments (1)

Comment

Author: Inga, 05-05-2014, 12:42

A natural person, a legal entity or another organization, its representation or subsidiary, which has the licence to handle endangered species, issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, can be permitted to take protected species, listed into the lists of protected species of animals, plants and mushrooms of the Republic of Lithuania and in the List of species of Community interest.

>>This comment is inappropriate

>>Reply

http://lt.lazdijuzvaigzde.lt/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2984&po...
08-2014

13-

The MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT of the Republic of Lithuania

Main page/Public information and public relations/Press releases/News

THE POND TURTLE – A STRICTLY PROTECTED SPECIES

In the mass media there have been private persons' and rural communities' appeals to the Lithuanian citizens, urging not only to have an eye on pond turtles, but also take and keep them until the appeals' authors come to take or photograph them.

Lithuanian naturalists and scientists are outraged by such appeals, since the pond turtle is one of rarest reptilian species in Lithuania, which has been included into the list of endangered species of Lithuania since 1976. The pond turtle is also included into the lists of species, provided in the Bern Convention (the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats) and Annexes II and IV to the Habitats Directive of the European Union. The species is included into the list of strictly protected species, the loss of habitats, as well as disturbance, catching and keeping at home can do severe damage to the species.

The Lithuanian Fund for Nature, scientists and volunteer naturalists dedicate a lot of attention to protection of pond turtles. A large number of pond turtles' habitats was restored and put in order by attempts of the Fund and the regional parks of Meteliai and Veisiejai. Already for several years, by implementing the project, funded by the EU, offspring turtles, taken from dangerous locations are hatched and nurtured at the Lithuanian Zoo until the age when they can be set free into their natural habitat.

It is strictly prohibited to take pond turtles and keep them at home and even photograph them in their natural habitat or egg-laying locations. Such actions can be performed only by the persons, who have appropriate licences, issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. Such wilful actions, which can harm the rarest and strictly protected species, can result in fines of up to 1000 LTL.

The Ministry applies to all the Lithuanian citizens with the request not to follow the initiatives, which can harm nature and, especially, endangered species. The pond turtle must live in a free habitat. Anyone, who has information on their habitats, may provide the data to the endangered species information system.

Public Information Division

14-05-2014

<http://www.am.lt/VI/index.php>

13-08-2014

Lithuanian Fund for Nature

Charity and Sponsorship Fund
Algirdo g. 22-3, Vilnius LT-03218, Lithuania
Tel.: (8 5) 231 0700, Fax: (8 5) 231 0441
e-mail: info@glis.lt

DATE: 08-08-2014 No. LGF-14-69, to No. of 21-07-2014

Re.: Survey of turtles

Dear Ms. Cimakauskienė,

We would like to thank you for your reply to our Letter No. LGF-14-69 of 08-08-2014, received by electronic mail on 13-08-2014.

As you know the Ministry of Environment, by its letter of 02-07-2014, notified the Association of Rudamina Community on the additional surveys of flora and fauna, performed by the Lithuanian Fund for Nature along the future LitPol Link, i.e. the 400 kV overhead power line between Poland and Lithuania and provided our contact details in case you wished to join and participate in the survey. However we received no written or verbal communication or request to participate in the survey from your representatives, therefore, on 16-07-2014, we additionally contacted representative of the Association of Rudamina Community Mr. R. Valiokas by telephone and verbally invited him to join the survey.

After the conversation with Mr. R. Valiokas, on 21-07-2014 we received the letter from your Association, requesting to provide the methodology, used for the survey.

Replying to your letter of 21-07-2014, the Lithuanian Fund for Nature, by its letter of 08-08-2014, proposed representatives of the Association of Rudamina Community to meet on 14-08-2014 at the specific location in the center of the Rudamina town and discuss all the details as regards the flora and fauna, protected under the Bern Convention, including the progress and schedule for the joint survey. However the Association of Rudamina Community did not respond to the invitation and no representative of your community arrived at the suggested location. When we called to your contact telephone number from the suggested location, we were informed that, due to the lack of time, none of representatives of the Association of Rudamina Community had a possibility to meet in the center of the Rudamina town at the proposed time.

In view of such circumstances, where we found it difficult to get in direct contact with representatives of the Association of Rudamina Community and the representatives do not arrive to the suggested meetings, we would like to, one more time, propose to meet at any of the three locations of survey of the European pond turtle (the addresses and coordinates of the locations are listed below) on 21 August 2014, from 9:00 to 12:00.

Representatives of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature will be waiting for you at the stated locations and together we will have a possibility to survey the location for occurrence of the European pond turtle.

Burbiškiai Village, Būdvietis Eldership, Lazdijai District Municipality
Coordinates of the meeting location:
461092, 6011179 (Lithuanian Coordinate System)
54.236294, 23.40317 (WGS)

54° 14' 10.66", 23° 24' 11.41" (WGS)

Burbiškiai Village, Būdvielis Eldership, Lazdijai District Municipality

Coordinates of the meeting location:

460766, 6010967 (Lithuanian Coordinate System)

54.234358, 23.398198 (WGS)

54° 14' 3.69", 23° 23' 53.51" (WGS)

Burbiškiai Village, Būdvielis Eldership, Lazdijai District Municipality

Coordinates of the meeting location:

461378, 6011411 (Lithuanian Coordinate System)

54.238398, 23.407516 (WGS)

54° 14' 18.23", 23° 24' 27.06" (WGS)

Executive Director

/signature/

Edmundas Greimas

The data is stored in the Register of Legal Entities,
Registration No. 190776346, VAT Payer's No. LT100005480317

from: Rudaminos bendruomenė Rudaminos
bendruomenė <rudaminosbendruomene@gmail.com>
to: edmundas.g@glis.lt
cc: Ivana.DALESSANDRO@coe.int,
Ramūnas Valiokas <ramva@ifm.liu.se>
date: Wed, Aug 13, 2014 at 1:16 PM
subject:
mailed- gmail.com
by:

Dear Mr Greimas,

Thank you for your letter from August 8th and the report by the Lithuanian Fund for Nature (LFN) describing the unsuccessful search for European pond turtle directly in the construction sites of the 400 kV overhead power line (OHL) in Lazdijai municipality.

Unfortunately, your response did not contain a prepared joint research plan, although from your previous communication by phone with Dr. Ramunas Valiokas, as well as from the letter we received from the Ministry of Environment we understood that our NGO would be engaged in such a research.

Instead of the research plan we received a report of a survey on several OHL construction sites that the LFN already performed between May 20- July 20, 2014 without participation of our NGO. We will provide our opinion regarding this study to the Bureau of the Bern Convention in due time.

Once again, we express our deep concern that the OHL project promoter and the construction company are declaring an objective and professional survey on protected species, while heavy OHL construction works have been going on the Lithuanian and Polish sides of the area described in our complaint since April.

Best regards,

Ruta Cimauskiene,
Head of Association Rudamina Community



**LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS APLINKOS MINISTERIJA
THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

A. Jakšto St 4/9, LT-01105 Vilnius, tel: (+370 5) 266 35 39, fax: (+370 5) 266 36 63, e-mail: info@am.lt
<http://www.am.lt>

Secretariat of the Bern Convention
Council of Europe
Biodiversity Unit
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

7 March 2014 No. (45-1)-D8-1814

**REGARDING COMPLAINT NO.2013/5: PRESUMED IMPACT OF A
CONSTRUCTION OF OVERHEAD POWER LINE (OHL) IN AN
ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA IN THE LITHUANIAN – POLISH
BODERLAND**

The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – Ministry of Environment) received a notification of 21 January 2014 from the Secretariat of the Bern Convention of the Council of Europe requesting the clarification on the presence of the protected species mentioned in the complaint – particularly the European pond turtle.

As we provided information in our response of 4 September 2013 to the Secretariat of Bern Convention at this time no additional or new information is available as no research or surveys were carried out and it was even not possible to get new data due to unsuitable for survey season. The best time to identify the presence of *Emys orbicularis* is in spring time during April or May – depending on weather conditions. As we were informed by the non-governmental organization – Lithuanian Fund for Nature (which implements projects for protection of the European pond turtle and other aquatic animals in that region of Lithuania) – the experts are planning to survey the respective area as regards to *Emys orbicularis* nesting sites, finding places or traces of their activities. As soon as new data is available we will provide it to the Secretariat.

As it was indicated in the previous response of the Ministry of Environment of 4 September 2013, qualified experts from respective fields were employed in the preparation of the EIA report. Finding places of European pond turtles (*Emys orbicularis*) were not recorded in the investigated area during the assessment. In addition, EIA report results are substantiated by data about finding places of protected animals, plants and fungi that is collected in the Protected Species Information System managed by the Ministry of Environment. Presently there is no additional data about the finding places of the European pond turtle at the locations specified by the Applicant provided to the Protected Species Information System neither by complainant or other experts.

We also would like to emphasize that during the approval of the EIA report, a condition, that it is necessary to preserve all existing and potential habitats of protected species' during the construction works of the Power Line was set.

Technical project has been prepared and building permit has been received in order to conduct Power line building works. The construction works will start in spring of 2014. During the preparation of the technical project, when choosing Power Line support building places, areas of valuable plants and animal habitats identified in the EIA report were taken into account. For the protection of the rest of possibly unidentified valuable biological diversity elements, provisions in the building contract concluded between LITGRID AB (Organizer of the planned activity) and the building contractor are included. One of the conditions is mandatory ecological supervision of technical project implementation and direct inspection of the future construction sites before the works by the ecology expert.

Viceminister

Linas Jonauskas