

Latvian Fund for Nature

FOR LATVIA'S LANDSCAPES

About Latvian Fund for Nature

The Latvian Fund for Nature (Latvijas Dabas fonds, LFN) is one of Latvia's largest and most experienced non-governmental environmental organisations, founded in 1990 and active for over 30 years. Its mission is to preserve Latvia's biological diversity — species, habitats, and ecosystems — through a mix of hands-on conservation and restoration, strong scientific expertise, and long-term cooperation with landowners and local communities. Alongside fieldwork, LFN plays an influential role in environmental policy by advocating for nature-friendly decisions at national and EU levels, and it runs wide-reaching public education and engagement activities, helping society understand and care for Latvia's biodiversity. LFN currently has more than 30 employees — including nature experts, nature restoration practitioners, experienced project managers and communicators.

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Latvian Fund for Nature and landscapes

Latvian landscapes are an integral part of both our national and personal identities — a treasure that holds and reflects our history and culture. We know that the choices we make today will shape the landscapes that, in turn, will shape the lives and wellbeing of our children and grandchildren. Landscapes are inseparable from biodiversity: the more diverse the landscape, the richer the nature it sustains. That is why we work for a biodiverse and thriving Latvian landscape, a landscape full of life.

Restoring and maintaining semi-natural grassland landscapes

The main direction of LFN's work in the past decade is semi-natural grasslands — meadows and pastures that are both biodiversity hotspots and classic Latvian cultural landscapes.

GrassLIFE / GrassLIFE2 (2017—ongoing): these projects scale up restoration of species-rich meadows across Latvia, pairing ecological restoration with long-term management systems and farmer support. Semi-natural grasslands are extremely rare in Latvia — they cover less than 1% of country's territory, and their protection is also landscape protection.





Gathering of grassland plant seeds. Photo: K.Tellans



Grassland products in market. Photo: K.Tellans



Mobile grazing herd in a landscape. Photo: K.Kalns

A movement “Let’s do meadows together!” (2024—ongoing) and restoration grants: LFN funds and coordinates volunteer and landowner restoration actions in Natura 2000 grassland sites, helping bring back open meadow mosaics. We also invite people to collect meadow seeds and donate them for restoration, or to use them to create their own meadows – and we provide instructions for that.

Grassland product brand (established in 2024): an economic tool tied to landscapes. By labeling products/services coming from well-managed semi-natural grasslands, LFN has created **ongoing incentives** for farmers to keep meadow landscapes open and diverse instead of abandoning or intensifying them.

Mobile grazing herd: In 2019 LFN established a mobile grazing herd — around 100 Galloway beef cattle that are transported during the grazing season to different semi-natural grasslands across Latvia that are difficult to mow or would otherwise be abandoned. The herd’s sole job is to **graze valuable, overgrowing species-rich grasslands**, suppressing reeds, shrubs and coarse grasses, and reopening the sward so characteristic meadow plants can return. By moving from site to site, the herd restores large areas efficiently (e.g., around ~182 ha in 11 sites in 2024 and about ~200 ha in 2025), including protected areas and even urban meadows, showing that low-intensity grazing can work in many landscape contexts. The mobile herd helps maintain **open, species-rich meadow mosaics**, increases habitat connectivity, and keeps cultural grassland landscapes functioning where traditional farming has declined. In several regular grazing sites the Galloways have already become a part of landscape themselves.

Wooded meadow landscapes

LFN is one of the key Latvian actors in conserving **wooded meadows and wood-pastures** — rare EU-priority habitats that are simultaneously biodiversity jewels and heritage landscapes.

Project WoodMeadowLIFE (2021—2026): restores and sets up long-term management for wooded meadows, working in areas such as Ziemeļgauja and other territories in Latvia. The project combines overgrowth removal, reintroducing grazing/mowing, and training for land managers. In total, 200 hectares of wooded meadows will be restored in Latvia.



An ancient wooded meadow in Ziemeļgauja. Photo: K.Kalns

Wetland, river-valley, and other habitat-mosaic landscapes

While semi-natural grasslands are the flagship, LFN also works on landscapes made of multiple habitats.

Through LIFE and national projects, LFN contributes to restoration/management of **wetlands and marsh meadows**, often as parts of larger habitat networks.

In broader ecosystem restoration campaigns (including a small-wetlands restoration grant initiative), LDF promotes **landscape-scale hydrology recovery**—bringing back small wetlands that stitch together agricultural and natural land uses.



Restoration of hydrological regime and a floodplain in Lubāna mitrājs. Photo: M.Maskalāns



View of Abava valley in 1920ies. A postcard from private collection.



View of Abava valley from the same viewpoint today. Photo: M.Locs

Public engagement

Project “Landscapes are speaking” (2016-2017) — a project devoted to Latvia’s 100th anniversary, Latvia’s landscapes and their connection to biodiversity. The project included a study on landscape changes during the 100 years, stories about landscape elements, and practical guidelines for caring for landscape elements like old trees, alleys, farmstead mosaics, wooded meadows, etc. as well as landscape restoration events. This project became Latvia’s entry to the Council of Europe Landscape Award (7th session, 2020—2021).

We have developed a special event format devoted entirely to landscapes — **Landscape Reading Tours**. Each tour offers an in-depth exploration of a specific landscape together with expert guides, and is complemented by an open-air concert and a shared meal, creating a rich, full-scale experience. Participants often tell us, *“This opened my eyes — I never imagined you could see a landscape this way.”* We have built Landscape Reading Tours into our projects, and each season we host around ten tours, typically welcoming 30–50 participants per tour.



Participants of a Landscape Reading Tour around Gaiziņš, the highest point in Latvia. Photo: LDF



The **Meadow Festival (Pļavas festivāls)** is the Latvian Fund for Nature’s flagship event since 2023 — an annual public celebration dedicated to Latvia’s natural grasslands and the people who care for them — an all-day, free outdoor event that mixes science, practice, and culture. It brings together nature experts, meadow managers, and visitors through lectures, workshops and masterclasses on meadow restoration and nature-friendly land use, practical consultations for anyone wanting to create or restore a meadow, a lively **Grassland Product** market showcasing goods and services that support meadow management, and concerts/creative activities that make grassland landscapes feel meaningful and enjoyable for a broad audience.