

**Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in general,  
and of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in particular,  
during the period since the National Report prepared in 1995  
for Ramsar COP6 and 30 June 1998**

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<b>Contracting Party:</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>
<b>Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority</b>	
Full name of the institution:	<b>Lithuanian Ministry of Environment</b>
Name and title of the head of the institution:	<b>Mr. Algis Caplikas, Minister of Environment</b>
Mailing address for the head of the institution:	<b>A.Jaksto 4/9, LT-2694 Vilnius, Lithuania</b>
Telephone:	<b>+370 2 610558</b>
Fax:	<b>+370 2 220847</b>
E-mail:	
Name and title (if different) of the designated contact officer for Ramsar Convention matters:	<b>Mr. Gediminas Rascius, Head of Protected Areas Strategy &amp; Planning Division of Forest &amp; Protected Areas Department</b>
Mailing address (if different) for the designated contact officer:	<b>Juozapaviciaus 9, LT-2600 Vilnius, Lithuania</b>
Telephone:	<b>+370 2 721918</b>
Fax:	<b>+370 2 723432</b>
E-mail:	<b>gediminas@nt.gamta.lt</b>

## **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1**

### **To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.**

- 1.1 Describe any actions your government has taken (such as hosting regional or subregional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighbouring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention.

## **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2**

### **To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.**

- 2.1 Has a National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan been developed, or is one being developed or planned for the near future? If so:

a. What are/will be its main features?

b. Was it, or is it, intended that the Policy/Strategy/Action Plan be adopted by the whole of Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.

c. How does it relate/will it relate to other national environmental/ conservation planning initiatives (e.g., National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies)?

**National Wetland Policy does not exist in Lithuania as a separate document. But there are other documents related to this issue.**

**Lithuanian Environmental Strategy was prepared by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (now Ministry of Environment) together with foreign experts in 1995 and approved by the Parliament in 1996. The National Environmental Strategy of Lithuania was used as the background for preparation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan.**

**Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan was developed in 1997 and adopted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (now Ministry of Environment) and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (now Ministry of Agriculture) on January 1998. This document presents action plans for protection of the most important ecosystems including wetlands (Baltic Sea shore, inland water bodies, and mires):**

- **Action plan for the protection of coastal and the Baltic Sea ecosystems;**
- **Action plan for the protection of inland aquatic ecosystems;**
- **Action plan for the protection of wetland ecosystems.**

- 2.2 If a policy is in place, how much progress has been made in its implementation, and what are the major difficulties being encountered in doing so?

**Main difficulties that stop implementation of planned actions are:**

- **not enough financial resources;**
- **not enough management plans;**
- **frequent changes of governmental bodies.**

- 2.3 If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with :
- a. a single Government Ministry,
  - b. a committee drawn from several Ministries, or
  - c. a cross-sectoral committee?

**Ministry of Environment**

- 2.4 For countries with Federal systems of Government, are there Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state or regional levels of Government?  
Yes/No

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- 2.5 Has a review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands been carried out, and if so, has this resulted in any changes which assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention?  
Please describe these.

**No**

- 2.6 Describe the efforts made in your country to have wetlands considered in integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management processes at the following levels:
- a. national

**The Master Plan of Lithuania is under preparation now. This work was started in 1997.**

- b. provincial

**Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan for the Curonian Lagoon is prepared by HELCOM PITF MLW Curonian Lagoon Area Task Team with the aim to balance the impact of human activities with the need to protect and sustainably develop the fragile ecosystem.**

**At present, Lithuanian Fund for Nature is preparing a management plan for Curonian Lagoon, as part of HELCOM PITF MLW Demonstration Project ("Management Plans for Coastal Lagoons and Wetlands") Phase 1b, 1998-1999. This project was funded by WWF Denmark.**

**Development of the General Plan of Klaipeda Region that covers the whole Lithuanian coastal zone, including the area where one of the most important in national scale - the Nemunas Delta Regional Park (Ramsar site) lies. Moreover, conservation and nature protection concerns were given a high importance in the plan.**

- c. local

**In 1997, Lithuanian Fund for Nature has prepared a management plan for Rusne Island (part of Nemunas Delta Regional Park), and now implementation of this management plan is carried out. Activities include management of grasslands as important habitats for birds. This project was funded by EUCC (European Union for Coastal Conservation).**

**The management plan for the Nemunas Delta Regional Park (Ramsar site) has been prepared in 1998 (supported by WWF Denmark). Currently it is still on the way of formal adoption.**

- 2.7 Have there been any publications produced, or practices documented, which could assist other countries to promote and improve the application of the Ramsar Wise Use of Wetlands Guidelines? Yes/No. If Yes, please provide details and copies.

**No**

- 2.8 Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advise of the actions taken since then “to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands” (Operative paragraph 9).

**A lot has been done for reducing pollution in general (construction of sewage treatment plants, reducing of agricultural run-off). Affect is pollution decreasing in the Nemunas Delta Regional Park (Ramsar site) which lies on Nemunas river delta (the Nemunas river catchment area is bigger than territory of Lithuania)**

- 2.9 Describe what steps have been taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions.

- 2.10 Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country? Yes/No

**Yes. The Law on Environmental Impact Assessment has been in force since 1996.**

- 2.11 Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country? Yes/No.

**Yes.**

If Yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilise resources for restoration or rehabilitation.

**Some priority actions concerning wetland restoration proposed in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan**

**Wetland restoration is priority for some protected areas especially Zuvintas Strict Nature Reserve (Ramsar site). The most serious problem facing the lake Zuvintas is the rapid decrease of the open water surface, which in turn causes problems for the bird life and for the general ecology of the lake. This open area is decreasing due to the strong spreading of the aquatic plants from the lakeshores towards the open water. A dam situated in the drainage channel of the lake regulates the level of the Lake Zuvintas. One usable source to get funding will be the different funds of European Union.**

- 2.12 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage active and informed participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.” (refer to Actions 2.7.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

**Usually actions are undertaken in the wetland areas, which are within a State Park (national or regional) or a Strict Nature Reserve, because those kind of protected areas are administered by a purposively appointed staff. Among other tasks, the administration is responsible for implementation of various education and partnership actions within a local community.**

In the Ramsar site - the Nemunas Delta regional park the involvement of local people is proceeded through:

1) extension of awareness (publication of pamphlets and brochures, lessons in local schools and involvement of children in various nature actions (clean-ups, camps etc.);  
2) encourage and support in any nature-friendly farming approaches (seeking for diminished area of arable land, application of eco-farming approach, postponed and special way of hay mowing - to favor preservation of biodiversity). It is anticipated that dialog with local farmers will be reinforced when under programs of donorship (support of WWF Denmark and North Holland Province), some nature-saving farming equipment is purchased (expected in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 1999). Farmers will become more interested in nature friendly farming through privileges they will be given - provision of cheap rental of machinery and new know-how challenges in agrofarming.

It is expected that these measures would attract people to Nature and mitigate their hostility against conservation restrictions applied.

Extension of the area from 5442 ha to 15000 ha of the Zuvintas Strict Nature Reserve (Ramsar site) as well as changing status of strict nature reserve into biosphere reserve was discussed including local communities and local people during 1998.

- 2.13 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands” (refer to Actions 2.8.1-4 in the Strategic Plan). Has this included a review of fiscal measures (taxation arrangements, etc.) to identify and remove disincentives and introduce incentives for wetlands conservation and wise use? Yes/No If yes, please provide details.

**Yes. See 2.12 concerning local farmers in the Ramsar site - the Nemunas Delta Regional Park.**

**Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3  
To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels**

- 3.1 Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country which focuses on, or includes, wetlands? Yes/No? If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4)

**Yes. The Environmental Education Strategy and Action Plan was adopted by the Government on February 1998. This Strategy and Action Plan includes wetlands too.**

- 3.2 Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and Ramsar’s Wise Use principles included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details.

**Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4  
To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.**

- 4.1 Describe the mechanisms in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the various institutions responsible for actions which can have an impact on the conservation and

wise use of wetlands. If one of the mechanisms is a National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee, please describe its composition, functions and *modus operandi*.

**In case of Nemunas Delta Regional Park, there has been signed an Agreement between the park administration and Peat Extraction company, which operates in the Aukstumale raised bog. In the agreement there were delimited boundaries of excavation fields, which must not be overcome and preliminary terms when the company should remove its facilities from the area. Another important item of the document was a bilateral agreement to initiate bog restoration activities.**

**Preliminary discussions have been also held with the Land Reclamation Company, which operates in the delta. Conservation people proposed to collaborate in a new direction to land reclamation - nature restoration. Concrete action was proposed: turning of almost abandoned summer type polder (terrestrial area dyked from flooding area) to completely natural site, where development of natural successions will not be disturbed neither by farming nor other economic activities.**

4.2 Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:

a. a review to identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands Yes/No? If yes, please indicate the major findings of the review.

**No**

b. a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries. Yes/No?

**No**

c. the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details.

**No**

d. people from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. Yes/No? If yes, please give details.

**Yes. One representative from the Meteliai Regional Park has attended the short wetland management training within Northwest Welsh (Snowdonia National Park). This visit was organised in the Europark Expertise Exchange project. This project was implemented by the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe and financed by EU Phare.**

## **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5**

### **To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).**

5.1 Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans:

a. being prepared? **Zuvintas strict nature reserve**

b. fully prepared? **The management plan for the Nemunas Delta Regional Park has been prepared in 1998. Currently it is still on the way of formal adoption.**

c. being implemented? **Nemunas Delta Regional Park**

Please indicate in the attached table of Ramsar sites which sites these are and what category they fall into.

- 5.2 Of the management plans referred to above, which ones have included a monitoring scheme or programme to allow changes in ecological character to be detected? Please indicate this in the attached table of Ramsar sites also.

**The State Monitoring Programme elaborated in 1998 cover all the territory of the country; consequently including protected areas. However in the Nemunas Delta Regional Park additionally will be implemented local monitoring to observe ecological trends within the park. Establishment of the programme will be supported by WWF Denmark.**

- 5.3 Has there been a change in the ecological character (either positive or negative) at any of your Ramsar sites or is this likely to occur in the near future? Yes/No. If Yes, please give details.

**Yes. Certain nature management activities directed towards improvement of habitats are intended to be carried out when the relevant action plan is approved. Alongside nature restoration activities will be implemented (see 4.1 and 2.8). All these actions will hopefully have a positive impact on the ecological state of the Nemunas Delta.**

**Negative changes. The most serious problem facing the lake Zuvintas (Ramsar site) is the rapid decrease of the open water surface, which in turn causes problems for the bird life and for the general ecology of the lake. This open area is decreasing due to the strong spreading of the aquatic plants from the lakeshores towards the open water.**

- 5.4 In the case of Montreal Record Ramsar sites where the Management Guidance Procedure has been applied, what is the status of the implementation of the MGP report recommendations? What is the expected time-frame for removing the site from the Montreal Record?

- 5.5 For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, "Ramsar sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties", please provide advice on the actions that have been taken in response to the issues raised at that time.

## **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6**

**To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention's criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.**

- 6.1 Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country? Yes/No.

**Yes**

If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No.

Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept and what information it contains.

**The Ministry of Environmental Protection in 1995 produced the third supplemented edition of the State Register of Peatlands. It includes the majority of wetlands of Lithuania, as most are peatlands. The Register contains data on mires that are larger than 3 ha, which constitutes 5,735 peatlands. The information provided on each site is as**

**follows: surface area (ha), maximum and average depth of peat (m), volume of peat (m<sup>3</sup>), transect of peat depth, map of boundaries (1:10,000 scale), administrative location, ownership.**

**The Register does not include data on biological diversity, but there is a plan to add this type of information. One way to fill this gap may be to link the Register to the Register on Biodiversity on which the Ministry of Environment is starting to work. Data on biological diversity are currently spread among many institutions.**

**The CORINE Land Cover Project of Lithuania produced the digital land cover database of Lithuania in a scale of 1:100,000 in 1998. The database is consistent with similar land cover databases prepared in other European countries. The data base use 44 standard CORINE land cover classes including wetlands and water bodies. The CORINE Land Cover Project of Lithuania was carried out by Lithuanian - Icelandic company HNIT-BALTIC GeoInfoServisas in co-operation with Institute of Aerial Geodesy. European Commission funded the project.**

- 6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of “important” wetlands for your country or region? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept, what criteria for “important” were used, and the types of information it contains.

**Yes. The countrywide inventory of all-important wetlands in Lithuania was initiated in 1997. The provided results will be compiled in the book “Important wetlands of Lithuania” (1998). This publication describes all important elements of the most valuable Lithuanian wetlands (designated and potential Ramsar sites), their important habitats, fauna and flora, their natural functions, economic and ecological values, national system of wetlands conservation and management. This book was inspired and organized by Wetlands International. It has been published with financial support from the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries.**

- 6.3 If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities. If this information is available, please indicate what definition of “wetland” was used.

**Total peatland (mires) area is 482,600 ha. Among them 56,800 ha are raised bogs, 44,000 ha transitional mires and 381,800 ha fens. Land reclamation, forest drainage and industrial peat cutting destroyed wetlands. During the last 30 years, 70 % of the wetlands have been lost.**

**Inland waters (lakes, rivers and reservoirs) cover 262,533 ha of territory of Lithuania. Among them there are 2834 lakes larger than 0.5 hectare and 758 rivers longer than 10 km. Out of 63,700 km of natural rivers, only 13,000 km has not been straightened.**

- 6.4 Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and Recommendations that Contracting Parties should give priority to listing Wetlands of International Importance which:
- meet the criteria for fish habitat (Resolution VI.2),
  - meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution VI.4),
  - are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution VI.5),
  - are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)
  - are coral reefs and associated systems (Recommendation 6.7)
  - are under-represented wetland types (which apart from d. and e. above include mangroves and sea grass beds) (Strategic Plan Action 6.2.3)

Yes/No? If yes, please describe these actions.

- 6.5 If your government indicated at COP6 that it would be proceeding to list further specific sites, please advise of the status of this action.
- 6.6 Please advise which of the sites included in the Ramsar List from your country are transfrontier wetlands (Refer also to 7.1).

**Part of the Nemunas river delta is located outside the Lithuania - in the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation. This is a vast biodiversity rich and scarcely urbanised area.**

- 6.7 Describe any plans, or actions being taken for further transfrontier sites to be listed (Refer also to 7.1).

**Preliminary contacts between Nemunas Delta Regional Park staff and Russian nature protection authorities have been recently established. Hopefully giving the whole delta area a status of transboundary (transfrontier) protected area will expand collaboration.**

### **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7**

**To mobilise international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.**

- 7.1 Briefly describe any bilateral or multilateral activities that have been taken, are under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7).

**In case of Nemunas Delta Regional Park - see 6.6**

- 7.2 Do you have Ramsar sites that are “twinned” with others, either nationally or internationally? Yes/No.

If yes, please give details.

- 7.3 Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, describe what mechanism(s) exist to assist regular dialogue and cooperative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:
- Convention on Biological Diversity
  - Framework Convention on Climate Change
  - Convention to Combat Desertification
  - Convention on Migratory Species
  - World Heritage Convention

**Convention on Biological Diversity is well coordinated between each other by responsible officers in the Ministry of Environment.**

**The Ministry has good relations with National UNESCO committee.**

- 7.4 Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

**Yes. Some research projects on migratory birds and fish are carried out by different institutions (mainly Lithuanian Ornithological Society, University of Klaipeda, and Lithuanian Institute of Ecology) in cooperation with foreign partners.**

- 7.5 Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

**Yes. Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Lithuania is supported by World Bank (Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan, 1997), Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries (Important wetlands of Lithuania, 1998), EU Phare (Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Baltic States and Poland), European Commission (The CORINE Land Cover Project of Lithuania, 1998), WWF Denmark (the management plan for the Nemunas Delta Regional Park, 1998), WWF Sweden (Conservation and Management of Lithuanian Wetlands, 1995-1997), EUCC European Union for Coastal Conservation (the management plan for Rusne Island, 1997)**

- 7.6 Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? Yes/No. If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget?

**Yes. Ramsar sites get annual budgetary allocation as State Protected Areas (Strict Nature Reserve and Regional Park) within larger budget of the Ministry of Environment.**

- 7.7 If your country has a development assistance programme, does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

**No**

- 7.8 Is there a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in your country, where one exists? Yes/No. If yes, what is that process.

**No**

## **Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8 To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.**

- 8.1 Has your government made voluntary financial contributions, other than the invoiced contributions or to the Small Grants Fund, to further the work of the Convention globally? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

**No**

- 8.2 If your country is in arrears with the payment of its annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention, please indicate the reasons for this situation and the prospects for paying these arrears in the near future.

**No**

## **Optional section - Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention**

These are **optional** questions relating to cooperation with and involvement of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

At COP6 some 42 NGOs made the “Brisbane NGO pledge of support for the Ramsar Convention”. The Standing Committee agreed that for COP7 there should be an effort made to gauge the level and type of cooperation which is occurring between government Administrative Authorities and the national and international NGOs with an interest in wetlands issues.

In this **optional** section of the National Report, you are asked to describe the nature of the cooperation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

- 9.1 Approximately how many NGOs have wetlands as part of their regular “business” in your country?

**Nine**

Please break this down between international, regional and national/provincial organizations.

**International:**

**WWF.**

**Regional:**

**Coalition for Clean Baltic;  
European Union for Coastal Conservation (EUCC);**

**National/provincial:**

**Lithuanian Fund for Nature;  
Lithuanian Green Movement;  
Lithuanian Ornithological Society;  
Lithuanian Geographical Society;  
Lithuanian Botanical Society;  
Cepkeliai Friends’ Club.**

- 9.2 Is there a regular forum or mechanism through which these NGOs express their views on wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation:
- to each other? Yes/No
  - to the government? Yes/No

**Yes**

If yes in either case, please give details.

**NGOs express their views on wetland conservation through different publications (books, booklets, brochures, bulletins) available to other NGOs and the Government. There is Advisory Council of the Ministry of Environment, which includes representatives of**

**NGOs too. There are also annual meetings between the Ministry of Environment and NGOs representatives.**

- 9.2 Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/No

**No**

- 9.3 Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1).

**Conservation and Management of Lithuanian Wetlands 1995-1997 prepared by Lithuanian Fund for Nature in co-operation with Lithuanian Ornithological Society, Lithuanian Geographical Society and Lithuanian Botanical Society. The aim of the project is to make comprehensive inventory of wetlands in Lithuania, to improve management of most valuable areas and to prepare Wetland Conservation Plan for Lithuania. This project was funded by WWF Sweden.**

- 9.5 Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives? If yes, please give details
- 9.6 Describe the themes of the Convention (refer to General Objectives 1-8 of the Strategic Plan) where you perceive the national/provincial NGOs to be most active.

## **Final comments:**

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

**Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan for Lithuania presents action plans for protection of the most important wetlands ecosystems and incorporate implementation of Ramsar Strategic Plan.**

10.2 Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with, and services provided by:

- a. The Ramsar Standing Committee
- b. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel
- c. The Ramsar Bureau
- d. The Ramsar NGO partners

10.3 Any other general observations and/or recommendations for the future.

**At present, Lithuanian Fund for Nature is preparing a management plan for Curonian Lagoon, as part of HELCOM PITE MLW Demonstration Project (“Management Plans for Coastal Lagoons and Wetlands”) Phase 1b, 1998-1999. This project was funded by WWF Denmark.**