Conservation at the national level

- Examples of ongoing work in Finland

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Black-tailed Godwit & Curlew

- BtG (VU): still increasing both in numbers and distribution (250-280 breeding pairs);
- Still have just under 40% breeding within the Natura 2000 network, but increasingly birds are moving to agricultural areas as well;
- Main threats: nest destruction/chick mortality, abandonment of grassland management, predation, climate change (flooding);
- Curlew (NT): declining/stable (87,000 breeding pairs);
- Disappeared from the southwestern and southern parts of the country - "Kun sä kuulet kuovin äänen, älä mene järven jäälle."
- Mainly breed in agricultural and seminatural grassland habitats;
- Main threats: nest destruction/chick mortality & predation (strong increase in parts).
Conservation measures for waders

- **Only species-specific measures for the BtG** (very small population in a concentrated area, large parts of which are protected);

- Management area has further increased in the Bothnian Bay core breeding area in Oulu region;

- All the **nests found in the core breeding area are marked** with signs on farmlands and coastal pastures - farmers informed = significant reduction of nest losses;

- There are **no Curlew-specific conservation measures** in Finland, but wider measures have benefitted Curlews and other waders;

- **Coastal areas**: management of breeding and staging habitats by grazing and mowing (inside and outside of SPA’s) on a wide scale (LIFE project, agri-environment schemes etc.);

- Various research and monitoring projects ongoing.
HELMI Habitats Programme

• Launched in 2020 - key tool for halting biodiversity loss in Finland: actions benefit hundreds of endangered species and most of the endangered habitats in our country (EUR 42 million – 2020-2030);

• Led by ENV Ministry – joint project with Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, implemented by the administrative branches of both ministries, municipal authorities & stakeholders;

• Covers wide range of habitats: peatlands, aquatic bird habitats, wetlands and coastal areas, semi-natural grasslands, forest habitats and aquatic environments;

• Actions are carried out both within and outside protected areas (participation of landowners is voluntary);

• Comprehensive view of habitats and the necessary restoration and management measures + stakeholder collaboration. Focus on key areas and sites to maximise impact on biodiversity.
HELMI: Waterbird habitats & wetlands

• Most of the significant wetlands and waterbird habitats in Finland are protected or are located on state-owned land;

• Restoration measures include clearing, dredging, mowing, raising the water level, hunting small carnivores, removing invasive species and management fishing aiming to achieve:

➢ 200 SPA:s and other valuable waterbird habitats in the conservation area network restored;

➢ 500 wetland habitat sites for birds established and restored outside the conservation area network;

➢ 100 restored sites managed after restoration and, where necessary, restoration measures repeated during the Helmi period;

➢ Intensified hunting of non-native predators in some of the restored SPA sites started in 70 sites;

➢ Network of protection and resting areas for birds supplemented through voluntary action models at 150 sites.
SOTKA Programme

• Specific **complementary part of HELMI** run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2020-2023 - EUR 6.8 million);

• Focus on game species (particularly declining waterbird populations), but **measures benefit wide range of species**: building wetlands and a network of resting areas, restoring peatlands and catchments, and **removing small predators** (particularly non-native mink and raccoon dog);

• Highlight: particular focus on **cooperation with landowners to establish wetlands that improve breeding success** (implemented by the Finnish Wildlife Agency);

• Good model of a cost-efficient way to build and restore high-quality habitats for waterbirds also outside protected areas;

• For example, in former peat production sites there may be large areas that are suitable for waterbirds without slow permit procedures and expensive excavation operations.
Moving beyond protected areas

• Many farmland birds are declining, yet agriculture areas remain largely outside of the scope of current conservation activities;

• Participating in the EU LIFE Farmland Birds project – recommendations too late for this latest CAP cycle;

• Autumn 2022: Finnish Museum of Natural History will undertake a modelling exercise to map out farmland bird hotspots for key species in decline (including Curlew);

• Include actions for farmland birds in key areas in Strategic LIFE IP project, (pilot measures on individual farms, develop guidance, awareness-raising by agriculture authorities etc.);

• Feed into the national commitments FI is expected to make under the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Restoration Act;

• Longer term: be ready with a holistic recommendation for the next CAP developed together with the agriculture authorities.
Also interested in exploring project ideas in the wintering areas!

Thanks!