

The Houting

In Denmark more than 350 species of plants and animals have disappeared over the last 150 years. In addition there are a large number of species, which are rare or endangered.

The fish called the houting definitely belongs amongst the rare species. It only lives in the Danish sector of the Wadden Sea area, having disappeared from Germany and the Netherlands.

Now, to save this fish species from complete extinction the Danish Forest and Nature Agency has initiated the Houting Project.

The project will ensure the houting's survival by restoring four rivers in south-western Denmark.

It is the second largest nature restoration project in Denmark – only exceeded by the restoration of the River Skjern.



Biology and distribution

The houting is a salmonid with a very characteristic pointed 'snout'. Like salmon the houting lives and matures in the sea - but in the autumn it ascends the larger watercourses to spawn.



Once the houting was widespread throughout the entire Wadden Sea region - from the Netherlands in the south to Skallingen (DK) in the north. It was a commercially important fish species spawning in most rivers.

Today, it has declined severely and its occurrence is now restricted to Denmark, where it reproduces in six river systems.

The dramatic decline was a result of the advance of industrialisation, dike building and canalisation over the last centuries.

Threats

As the houting is unable to pass weirs and fish ladders, the presence of even small obstacles in rivers is one of the main impediments to successful reproduction.

Silting of spawning grounds is also a severe problem. Furthermore, the houting fry require areas of reed beds or flooded meadows where they forage for several months prior to migrating to the sea – such areas have also diminish considerably.

Previous restocking attempts in Denmark have not been successful as they were not followed up by habitat restoration.

Today we know what is necessary for the houting to survive and once again become common throughout the Wadden Sea area. To enable that goal the Houting-project was initiated in 2005.

Threatened species

Taken as a whole, the entire population of houting in Denmark – and thereby in the world! - has been estimated to be about 7000 spawners. Therefore, the houting is totally protected.

Furthermore, the houting has been designated as a special priority species in the EU Habitat Directive – as a consequence Denmark has an imperative duty to protect the species and improve its survival.



Many other species will benefit

The houting has a natural leading part in the Houting-project... But it is not the only species benefiting significantly from the project.

Many other animal and plant species will gain as the houting's habitats and survival are ensured – species as e.g. salmon, lampreys and otter – and maybe even the white stork.

The Project

Given the international importance of the species the EU-LIFE fund financially supports the Houting-project with 8 million € of a total budget of 13.4 million €.

At the end of 2010 the Houting-project will have restored four Danish rivers. The project will:

- Remove 13 obstacles
- Give access to additional 130 km new river habitats
- Eliminate mortality of drifting fry past fish farms
- Create new spawning grounds
- Restore approx. 30 km river
- Create 500 ha new nursery areas
- Purchase of commercial netting rights



The project in River Varde Å:

- Re-meandering and enlarging the original river Varde Å
- Restoring 30 meanders (17 km -> 21 km)
- Demolishing Ansager Dam
- Closure of Ansager Canal
- All water back into River Varde Å
- Free passage past Sig Fish Farm
- 30.000 m³ new spawning gravel

The project in River Sneum Å:

- Re-meandering of 3.5 km river
- Creating new wetland
- Closing of three fish farms

The project in River Ribe Å:

- Demolishing of a stamp mill
- New flooding frequency to benefit fry
- Free passage past two fish farms
- New riffles / spawning gravel
- Purchase of commercial netting rights

The project in River Vidå:

- Free passage past Bachmanns Mill
- 90 ha new wetlands
- Free passage past a fish farm

Learn more about the Houting-project on

www.houting.dk



LIFE Nature works to conserve natural habitats and the wild fauna and flora of European Union interest, according to the Birds and Habitats directives, thus supporting implementation of the European Union's nature conservation policy and the **Natura 2000 Network**.



Read more about LIFE on:
www.ec.europa.eu/life

Read more about Natura 2000 on:
ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/home.htm

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The Forest and Nature Agency manages 190.000 ha of State-owned forest and other nature areas in Denmark.

The Agency works to promote sustainability in the administration of Denmark's natural and historical heritage in a balance between use and protection.

Visit us at: www.skovognatur.dk/English

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Ministry of the Environment
Danish Forest and Nature Agency

