

The EU Nature Restoration Agenda

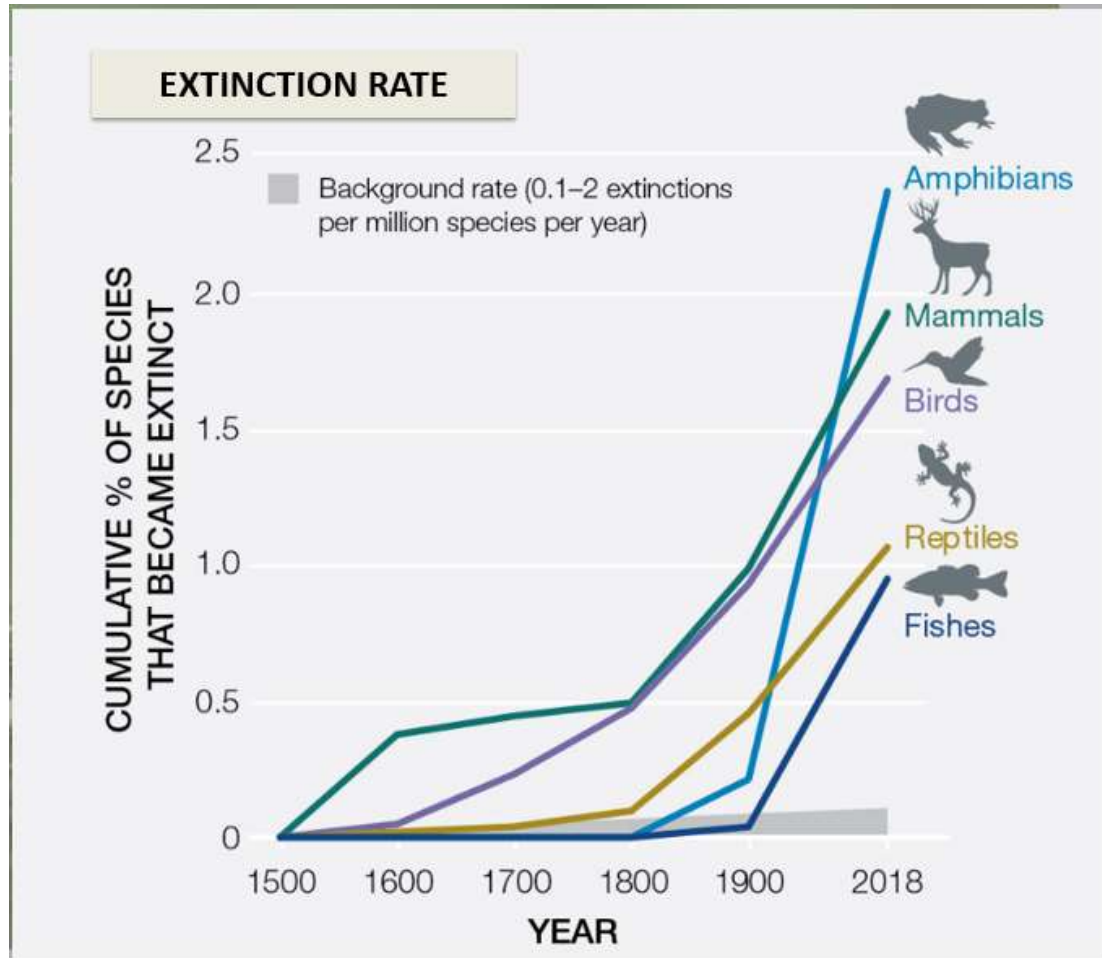
**Nature Restoration in Europe: What is the role of
Protected Areas?**

SIGGEN Seminar March 2022
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DG ENV D3

European Union



| The global and EU biodiversity crisis



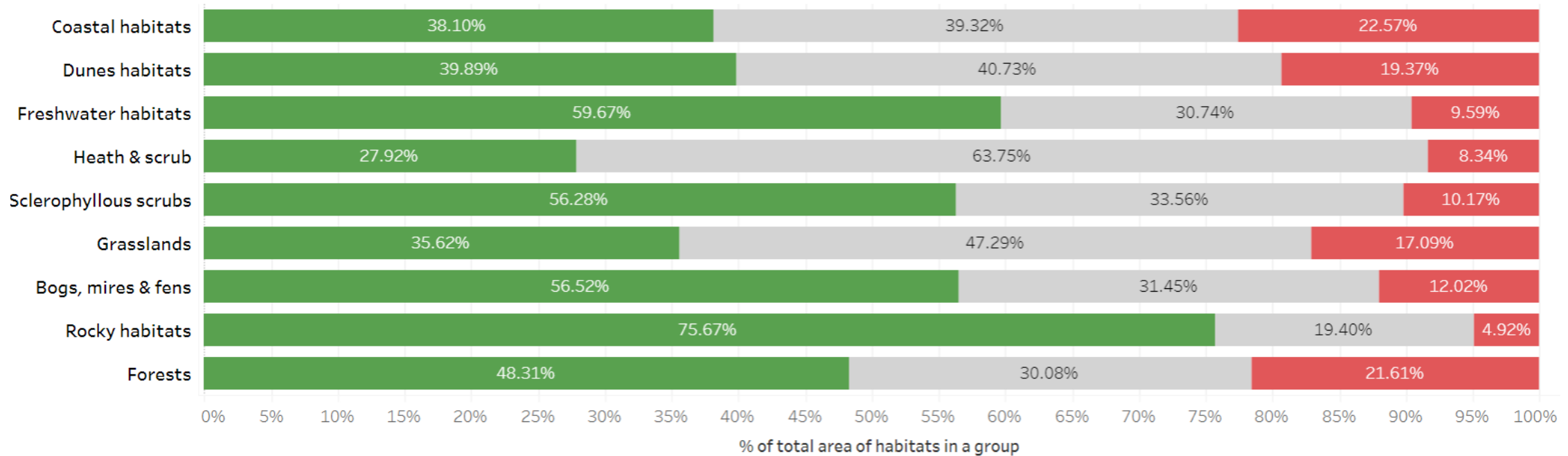
Biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems, continue at an alarming rate, across the broad range of ecosystem types in the EU.

In the EU:

- >80% of habitats in poor condition, peatlands, grasslands and dune habitats worst
- In Western, Central and Eastern Europe wetlands have shrunk by 50% since 1970
- 71% of fish and 60% of amphibians have been declining over the last decade

EU: Annex I habitat area in good, unknown and not-good condition (State of Nature in the EU 2020)

Proportion of habitat area reported with good, not-good and unknown habitat condition



All terrestrial Annex I habitats represent 24 % of the EU land territory (marine: 4.8 % of the EU seas)



| Time is running out ... for biodiversity & climate

- Strong interdependence between biodiversity loss and climate change
- Restoring ecosystems will be fundamental in helping to combat climate change and also reduce risks to food security (IPCC, 2022)
- Example: drained peatlands under intensive agricultural use cover only **3%** of EU's agricultural land but are responsible for **25%** of the green-house gas emissions from EU's agricultural sector

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

Strategy adopted by the European Commission on 20th May 2020

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>

- Overall goal: **to put biodiversity on the path to recovery** by 2030, by protecting and restoring nature and ecosystems in the EU
- **Headline targets:**
 1. Establish a **coherent network of protected areas** of at least 30% of the EU land and sea
 2. Develop an **EU Nature Restoration Plan**
 - Legally binding targets
 - Targets on better implementation ‘improvement target’ for habitats and species of the nature legislation



| A nature restoration law?

*“The Commission will put forward a proposal for **legally binding EU nature restoration targets** to restore degraded EU ecosystems, **in particular those with the most potential to capture and store carbon** and to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters”*

- The Strategy was **endorsed by Member States & the European Parliament** – both calling for more ambition on nature restoration
- **Public support for nature restoration is very high** → Eurobarometer survey on biodiversity (2018-2019) respondents ranked restoration of nature among the most important actions that the EU should take to protect biodiversity
- The restoration of ecosystems is **high on the international agenda** - UN Decade for Restoration



Approach of the draft proposal

- Type of act: **Regulation**
- **Complements, adds value to & reinforces the existing environmental acquis**, in particular, the nature legislation, MSFD & WFD
- **Synergies between climate change & nature restoration**
- Targets at **large scale restoration** effort (on top of an effective protection/conservation efforts) via **effort based & result based targets**
- Targets building on **Annex I habitats & beyond, habitats of species but also other ecosystems including urban.**



Main elements of the draft proposal

- Overarching **objective** & a set of **targets and obligations for 2030/2040/2050** for specific ecosystems, e.g. forests, wetlands, agro-ecosystems, coastal ecosystems, marine ecosystems, and other such as urban ecosystems.
- Key requirement: **National Restoration Plans** – MS to identify by when, where and how to put in place restoration measures to achieve the targets (plus policy coherence, public consultation, ...)
- Provisions on the **assessment & review** of these plans
- Provisions on **monitoring & reporting**.



Concepts

Restoration means the process of actively or passively assisting the recovery of an ecosystem towards or to good condition... - *“highest level of condition attainable”*

Restoration measures for habitat types and habitats of species include to...:

Improve / Re-establish / Re-connect / Enhance species populations

Good condition means a state where the key characteristics of an ecosystem, namely its physical, chemical, compositional, structural and functional state, and its landscape and seascape characteristics, reflect the high level of ecological integrity, stability and resilience necessary to ensure its long-term maintenance;

For **Habitats Directive Annex I** habitats good condition is assessed and reported under Art.17 of the Habitats Directive (**‘structure & function’ (including typical species)** parameter)



Other targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy

(not legally binding)

The “30% status improvement target” by 2030

Guidance: <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/fcb355ee-7434-4448-a53d-5dc5d1dac678/library/4d8f2f91-7708-4ed2-ba0e-e7a945a6d56a/details>

... MS to **ensure no deterioration** in conservation trends and status of all protected habitats and species by 2030 & **at least 30% of species and habitats not currently in favourable status** are in that category or show a **strong positive trend** by 2030.

The “30% protected area target” by 2030

Guidance: <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/6f30d1d2-d6f2-4c6e-a4dc-1feb66201929/library/89652963-8cc4-459a-b24f-19373ea73fbf/details>

Legal protection for at least **30 % of EU land/freshwater area & of EU sea area** including **strict protection for at least 10 % of EU land/freshwater area 10 % of EU sea area**

Both ‘voluntary targets’ complement & support legally binding targets



| The role of protected areas

- Crucial & decisive in many ways!
- Restoration inside but also outside protected areas needed
- Example Annex I habitats:
 - 24% of EU land
 - Appr. 38% of total Annex I surface area in EU is inside Natura 2000 (SoN data 2020)
- Protecting restored areas

Your view?



Thank you!

