

FUNDAMENTALS OF SPECIES CONSERVATION IN ESTONIA

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Species conservation by Nature Conservation Act is based on categories. There are 570 protected species in total in Estonia, named by the regulation of the Minister of the Environment. Categories are based on species rareness, distribution, population size, vulnerability etc.

The Act determines different measures to protect the species: damaging the individuals, formation of conservation areas and management plans is prohibited. Today, there is 1048 species protection sites all over Estonia and the number is slowly increasing. 25 species have management plans that give an overview of species' condition, threats, risks and management actions to preserve or favor species condition. One of the most important measures is monitoring in order to get the data about species status and find out whether the management is really working.

Estonia is becoming to face the same problem as western countries – important species sites are fragmented and the metapopulation does not work. Due to yet developing society, the approach to the nature is anthropocentric and causes false issues to dominate over real species conservation issues. Other fundamental problems are the lack of data and experts of species and in some parts weak legal system.

Environmental Department has 21 conservation biologists whose most important tasks include gathering data from the field, amending environmental register, participating in conservation planning and integrating know-how about species in departments' decisions.