



WWF

NEWSLETTER

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## WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

# BALTIC ECOREGION NEWS

## Bluefin Tuna in the Baltic

One hundred years ago, tuna was common along the Swedish west coast. Commercial fishing from the 1930s caused it to disappear completely from Swedish waters but today we are witnessing a remarkable comeback.

After 9 days on the water and over 3,000 hours of angling effort, 18 Bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) were tagged in Danish and Swedish waters this autumn. These fish, weighing between 130–250 kg, now carry satellite transmitters to collect information about migratory routes and spawning patterns. For 12 months the transmitters will provide information vital to future fisheries management. DNA samples collected show whether the tuna belongs to the Mediterranean Sea spawning stock or the one in the Gulf of Mexico. No one knows how the different stocks mix when swimming in their northern distribution limit of Scandinavian waters.

Bluefin tuna has been classified as endangered in 2010 yet recent conservation actions have helped



Photo: Mikael Övegård

the recovery of the stocks. Their presence in the region is due to a combination of warmer temperatures and migration of their important prey making the chances to see tuna in Danish and Swedish waters possible.

This successful project is a joint enterprise between Technical University of Denmark (DTU Aqua)

and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU Aqua), in cooperation with dozens of volunteer recreational fishermen and WWF and with support from the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

Contact: [Inger Näslund](#)

*Their presence in the region is due to a combination of warmer temperatures and migration of their important prey making the chances to see tuna in Danish and Swedish waters possible.*

# EDITORIAL: THE OCEAN – AN IMPORTANT FRONTIER OF CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change – an ever more visible phenomenon with devastating impacts for people and nature as we have witnessed this year with hurricanes like Irma and Maria, massive flooding, and coastal communities and small islands at risk of disappearing altogether. The ocean plays a critical role in buffering the world from the negative effects of climate change. It absorbs **30 percent of all greenhouse gases and 90 percent of the excess heat** caused by global warming. Because of this our oceans' rising temperatures have resulted in mass bleaching of coral reef ecosystems – the world's largest living structures dying in front of our eyes.

We face an enormous challenge to make the connection between climate action and the ocean. More and more countries are developing climate-resilient strategies. This is heartening, although we know there are still skeptics who refuse to help move forward (let alone with the urgency called for) with need to scale up efforts to conserve marine ecosystems in the explicit context of climate change. The need to scale up efforts to conserve marine ecosystems in the explicit context of climate change was clearly reflected at the 4th Our Ocean Conference in Malta this October. There, 400



Photo: Paulina Heikinen / WWF

commitments were made, including toward the creation of new marine protected areas (MPAs) spanning over 2.5 million km<sup>2</sup> and intensified efforts around climate change.

Climate change impacts in our region are expected to drastically modify marine ecosystems and coastal areas, on top of all the existing human induced pressures. **The Baltic is the world's fastest warming sea.** Oxygen levels are ever more depleted and sea ice coverage is declining quickly. We are already seeing how the food chain can change and entire species disappear or reappear as fish are influenced by the change in temperatures and salinity, as well as access to food and predators.

Last year and again this past summer, schools of Bluefin tuna were reported along the west coast of Sweden and southwestern Baltic due in part to rising water temperatures (see cover page). The shift in

*"We face an enormous challenge to make the connection between climate action and the ocean."*

the distribution of fish populations has implications for both setting MPA networks and commercial fisheries.

Approaches to address the impacts and risks of climate change for marine activities are still nascent. One important tool to help adaptation strategies is Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) – on which the Baltic countries are the most advanced in Europe. Although many see MSP solely as a means of managing maritime uses at sea, in fact it is an ecosystem-based process that can address climate mitigation and adaption for the region as a whole. As a complement to MPAs, MSP can form the bedrock for a truly Sustainable Blue Economy in the Baltic Sea region.

WWF is collaborating with relevant stakeholders to help accelerate the transition to a world in which people and businesses prosper in and with healthy, well-managed ecosystems. We hope you will join us on our journey and enjoy this edition's news.

*Best regards,*  
*Ottilia Thoreson and Anu Suono*



Photo: WWF

Pavan Sukhdev

## A Warm Welcome to WWF International's New President Pavan Sukhdev

The Baltic Ecoregional Programme extends a warm welcome to incoming WWF International President, Pavan Sukhdev – an exciting appointment at a time when striking the balance and understanding the synergies between economics and ecosystem integrity has never been more important.



Photo: Stellan Andersson / WWF Sweden

Anu and Ottilia

## DANIEL PETTERSSON ON SDG14 AND OCEANS



Photo: Alan Afkisson

**WWF had the privilege of speaking with Daniel Pettersson**, Ocean Focal Point at the Swedish Foreign Ministry, about the future of ocean conservation, Sweden's global role, and taking a regional approach here in the Baltic. Here below a few highlights from the conversation.

**WWF:** *The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into effect in January 2016 as “a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity”. Why is it important to have a dedicated ocean goal?*

**Daniel Pettersson (DP):** Looking at most of the other SDGs, we have made progress and are going in the right direction. But this is not true for oceans where the scenarios are serious and daunting. For example, we are in danger of having more plastic than fish in the seas and of losing the coral reefs. All this could happen in a not too distant future.

Secondly, oceans and seas deserve to be placed at the centre of the international development agenda. Oceans are important to help deliver on all other SDGs, for poverty eradication, food security, gender equality, etc. We see the [UN 2030] Development Agenda as

totally integrated and universal. It is not only for the developing world, as the Millennium Development Goals were. SDG14 is equally valid for us in Scandinavia as it is for those in the Caribbean, the South Pacific and so forth. So naturally it deserves an SDG of its own.

**WWF:** *Once the SDGs were agreed, Sweden and Fiji stepped forward and took a leadership role on SDG14 on Oceans, among other things helping to host the UN Ocean Conference in New York last June. What prompted Sweden's interest in taking on such a leadership role?*

**DP:** There are several reasons. We have, in Isabella Lövin, a devoted and highly engaged Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate (and Deputy Prime Minister). She actually started her political career working on ocean and fisheries issues.

Environmental engagement is also part of a long tradition for Sweden, starting in 1972 with the United Nations conference on the Human Environment hosted in Stockholm. This conference was coincidentally opened on the same day – 5th June, exactly 45 years before – as the inauguration of the UN Oceans Conference, and led on to the Earth Summit and Rio+20, for example.

We are happy that Portugal and Kenya offered to host the next UN conference in 2020, and hope to have started a new tradition.

We also know a lot about oceans and seas issues, and how to cooperate (not least with the Baltic). When I go abroad I am often struck by the number of Swedes in senior positions on marine issues, which is at least in part a result of the work done here over time.

**WWF:** *Unlike other SDGs, there is no single international body charged with driving the Ocean Goal. Ocean governance is instead divided between different sector-driven organizations or by regional conventions and national/international policies. How can we ensure effective cross-sectoral governance of the oceans to better guarantee long term health and productivity?*

**DP:** International ocean issues are quite divided, not least in the UN, across bodies such as the IMO, the FAO, UNEP, etc. We need a better mechanism to enable all actors to work together. SDG14 is a good starting point because it integrates all relevant aspects. Tellingly, we sometimes call the visualization of the ocean governance framework “spaghetti soup”. SDG14 could be an assembly point to bring the whole community together. We're happy that the UN Secretary General appointed Peter Thomson as Special Envoy for the Ocean – an important role to bring people together to work on oceans.

The work in the Baltic region can be used as a template, to showcase approaches for application in other regional contexts, such as the Northern Mozambique Channel. Organizations like WWF can help contribute to policy making at home, in the Baltic, and use this experience elsewhere. >>

## CONTINUED – DANIEL PETTERSSON ON SDG14 AND OCEANS

**WWF:** *Much needs to be done to address the many threats that the Baltic Sea faces today if we are to enjoy its natural resources in the future. How can SDG14 help put the Baltic Sea back on track?*

**DP:** SDG14 should be used as a touchstone for mobilizing and saving our oceans and seas. Agenda 2030 is a universal development agenda so countries should include SDG14 in their national development plans. Voluntary processes should continue to provide momentum.

Apart from national implementation, I hope that countries will also work actively with SDG14 as a stepping stone to regional cooperation, for example with HELCOM and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Ocean Conference generated commitments from all kinds of actors: states, companies operating in the Baltic, civil society groups. If all of these actors and stakeholders implement what they promised to, this will mean a strong positive push for the Baltic.

**WWF:** *Which of the ten SDG14 targets do you see as most important for the Baltic Sea?*

**DP:** Tricky question. Some targets are less pertinent to the Baltic, but most apply. Fishing is of course important, and acidification. But if I had to pick just one it would be Target 1 on reducing ocean pollution. A lot of pollution comes from land-based sources and we really need to do more about that here.

**WWF:** *In October the European Commission hosted the fourth ‘Our Ocean’ conference in Malta. The focus was on the ocean in relation to climate change, marine pollution, sustainable fishing and sustainable blue growth. Implementation of commitments made at previous ‘Our Ocean’ Conferences*

*was reviewed and new commitments sought. What commitments has Sweden made?*

**DP:** Sweden presented several ambitious commitments, although they were not necessarily only made because of the conference. Internationally we committed €3.8 million to IUCN for 2017–2020 for marine plastics work in Africa and Asia Pacific. We also pledged €10.5 million to a Pacific – EU marine partnership program, together with the European Commission.

Nationally we committed over €6.3 million to Marine Protected Areas and biodiversity, to work with the 13.6 percent MPAs now designated in Swedish waters. We also introduced the Eco Bonus initiative under which we will allocate €5.2 million annually for at least 3 years to shift freight from land transport to less harmful sea transport, in line with the national maritime strategy. We further presented an ambitious new national plan in which we will invest €55 million to combat marine pollution. This will focus on removing hazardous substances, combating eutrophication, and addressing plastics through clean-ups and developing alternatives.

**WWF:** *The recent series of meetings dedicated to oceans shows genuine interest to change the ‘business-as-usual’ approach to how we manage our oceans. How do we ensure that this remains high on the political agenda for all countries, and particularly in our own backyard, the Baltic Sea?*

**DP:** All of these conferences are good. We should continue to build on this momentum, working together and avoiding overlap. Oceans and seas issues are higher on the world agenda than ever before. We would like to keep it that

way. The UN processes are very important. Peter Thomson’s appointment was a big step forward for oceans and seas worldwide, to help coordinate the UN system.

From a Swedish perspective, we will use the Ocean Conference and platforms such as HELCOM and the Nordic Council to keep pushing on these issues and hope that others will follow suit. A Sustainable Blue Economy can provide many job opportunities and other benefits, such as well-being in terms of, for example, beaches for leisure activities. In the Baltic we have to make this more than just a conservation issue. We will continue to work in the vein of our integrated maritime policy. Everything is connected. Conservation and protection can be combined with sustainable blue growth.

It was good to see from the Malta conference – which was a very ambitious exercise – that the European Commission is fully on board. It feels we are gaining momentum in the EU with countries like Germany and France getting heavily involved and also increasing interest from, for example, the three [eastern] Baltic States. Hopefully we have created something that sticks.

**WWF:** *Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. Do you have any closing words?*

**DP:** Although there are many states engaged, there are also many others which are not, so the involvement of civil society is critical. WWF is seen as a very important partner from the Swedish government’s perspective, especially regarding your experience in working with these issues. This is not just a government thing. It must also involve companies, academia, philanthropy, and not least civil society.

# INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



Janica Borg and Dr. Sylvia Earle



Photo: Bob Zuur

## “Without Blue There’s No Green, Without Green There’s No Us”

**La Serena-Coquimbo, Chile, 4–8 September:** The largest global meeting on ocean and coastal conservation, the International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC4), brought together over 1,000 participants. Experts, community members, conservationists and authorities from 80+ countries shared a common sense of urgency.

At the opening of the conference, Yolanda Kakabadse (WWF’s outgoing International President) told the gathering, “Let’s work together to raise our ambition. We need to raise awareness not just among us – the converted – but also among the unconverted.” Noting that “if oceans were a country they would rank 7th largest economy in the world”, President Kakabadse remarked, “without blue there’s no green, without green there’s no us.” Other speakers, including Dr. Sylvia Earle (also known as “Her Deepness”), stressed that saving the oceans is not a job for future generations but rather one for all of us, to be done now.

The Baltic Sea was presented by

Janica Borg, Marine Conservation Officer at WWF Finland, who took part as a panelist in a symposium on Marine Protected Areas, MPAs as a tool for achieving Aichi Target 11 and Sustainable Development Goal 14 (the ‘Ocean Goal’). The panel discussion focused on how protecting the oceans is about both reaching the 10 percent coverage goal and the quality of that protection. Janica presented results of her work on MPA management efficiency as a key approach to achieving the qualitative aspects of the Aichi 11 Target.

The message from the Baltic Sea – where the countries have already reached the 10 percent target – is that there is little value in reaching the 10 percent goal if the quality of the protection is poor.

The conference was followed by a high-level meeting in Valparaiso on 9 September, focused on high-level scientific discussions around ocean conservation and MPAs. The next **IMPAC** will be held in Canada.

Contact: [Janica Borg](#)

## From Critic to Contributor

In 2012, the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) actively criticized the initial assessment of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). This was followed with inputs provided to the monitoring and measures programmes.

In the upcoming second round of MSFD implementation, ELF will be involved in a slightly different way. The organization has been sub-contracted by Estonia’s Ministry of Environment to compile the synthesis on the assessment of the marine environment, Good Environmental Status (GES) description and revised environmental targets. ELF’s work will be supported by expert input, in particular from the Estonian Marine Institute at the University of Tartu and the Department of Marine Systems at Tallinn’s University of Technology.

Contact: [Aleksei Lotman](#)

# INTEGRATED OCEAN MANAGEMENT AND MARITIME ACTIVITIES



Photo: Gail Holloway / WWF

## Seeking Ocean Witnesses in the Baltic Region

The Ocean Witness platform is a joint initiative by Conservation International, Rare and WWF to elevate and amplify the voices of those most affected by changes happening in the ocean. In presenting the project at IMPAC4, Yolanda Kakabadse (WWF's outgoing International President) spoke passionately about the voice of communities being the voice of nature and called on all present to raise our collective ambition to deliver ocean protection well beyond the Aichi targets, towards 2030. Platform partners showcased some of the work being done to empower communities to conserve our oceans, as did Ricardo Bosshard (CEO of WWF Chile) in the local context.

John Tanzer (WWF's Practice Leader for Oceans) emphasized WWF's focus on putting people at the heart of conservation, and

thus the importance of community engagement and commitment to securing strong conservation outcomes for the future. The Ocean Witness story from Raja Ampat, in the Bird's Head Seascape of Indonesia, was premiered.

We are looking for Ocean Witnesses from the Baltic region as well. Please contribute to the to the platform by [sharing your ocean stories](#) and spreading the word about Ocean Witness.

Contact: [info@oceanwitness.org](mailto:info@oceanwitness.org)



## Blue Economy at the Our Ocean Conference

**Malta, 5–6 October:** In May 2015 WWF's Baltic Programme launched a set of [principles](#) to help fill the gap in shared understanding about what characterizes a Sustainable Blue Economy, and toward ensuring that the economic development of the ocean contributes to true prosperity.

WWF was pleased this work was recognized at the recent Our Ocean Conference hosted by the European Commission, where the following announcement was made:

'Althelia Ecosphere, Aviva Investors, the BPCE Group, the European Investment Bank, Seven-ture Partners, Willis Towers Watson and the World Bank announced their participation in a partnership to support the development of a Sustainable Blue Economy. Contributing towards this goal, they agreed to develop a set of sustainability principles that will guide investment and financing decisions in the 'blue economy', with a view to announcing these principles in 2018. They are also willing to engage with other financial institutions and economic players to promote this partnership. This partnership is supported by the European Commission, the Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit and WWF.'

Contact: [Pauli Merriman](#)

# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

## Latvian Year of the Eel

Every year the Latvian Museum of Nature announces an ‘animal of the year’. In 2017 that honour went to the European eel (*anguilla anguilla*). Pasaules Dabas Fonds (PDF) took active part in a campaign on the eel and its challenges.

The campaign focused on educat-

ing the Latvian public on the eel’s life-cycle, the risks of over-fishing, and on the CITES convention. The campaign also helped to explain the proposal by European Commission to ban eel fisheries in the Baltic Sea.

Through the year children from across Latvia drew pictures of eels

and their life cycles. The Museum of Nature and PDF launched an exhibition with the best pieces. It will be a part of the general exhibition of the Museum of Nature until March 2018.

Contact: [Elīna Kolāte](#)



Photos: Pasaules Dabas Fonds

## Slip Sliding Away

Classified as ‘critically endangered’ by CITES since 2009, eels have finally come into the limelight. It’s about time. WWF’s first consumer seafood guide in 2000 had European eel on red light advice, meaning “Do not eat!” Yet despite there being an active targeted eel fishery, and unlike other commercial fish species in the Baltic, no fishing quota has been set for eel.

Eel is a unique fish, a survivor from pre-historic times that spawns only once in its lifetime, and only in the Sargasso Sea in the western Atlantic. Traditionally eaten in parts of the Baltic as a Christmas dish, this fish is a slow growing, long-lived species which makes it particularly vulnerable.

Eel populations have faced

a drastic decline in recent years, thanks mainly to overfishing and the construction of hydropower dams and other obstructions on their migratory path. European Member States have taken actions to allow the eel stock to recover through national management plans, but there has been little improvement to the overall stock. This autumn the European Commission proposed a ban on all fishing of eel in the Baltic



Photo: Kustbeveiligingen

Sea. Member States rejected the proposal and are now scheduled to discuss the state of the eel and a proposal for an European-wide fishing ban at the next Fisheries Council meeting, 11–12 December.

Along with other NGOs in the region, WWF is following the discussion closely. We call on countries to honour their commitments to protecting the European eel, a stock which is at less than 5 percent of its original population size. We further call for a total ban on all fishing of eel in Europe and Northern Africa if we want to see any signs of recovery. On a national level, governments must also ensure the removal of all upstream obstructions to eel migration routes.

Contact: [Ottília Thoreson](#)

# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

## Gathering Up the Ghost Nets

**Marelitt project** partners and fishermen from Estonia, Germany, Poland and Sweden spent 2000 hours at sea from July to mid-October and managed to retrieve nearly 10 tonnes of derelict fishing gear, while also testing the methodology for ghost net search and retrieval developed originally by WWF Poland and Polish fishermen. Steering these actions at sea is a pan-Baltic Map, presenting areas of ghost nets presence and possibility to retrieve them. Five tonnes of nets were collected in one of these hot spot areas identified in the project only within few days.

Some 500 kg of ghost nets were also retrieved near a harbour quay and several wrecks in Germany. Some traps contained entangled crabs which were set free where possible. Young eels were found using discarded gillnet bundles as hiding places. The campaign with local divers and fishermen will continue throughout the winter and spring of 2018, with a special focus on the search for ghost nets lost on so-called 'underwater hooks' – obstacles encountered during fishing activities and provided by fishermen in support of the ghost net search. These results of the actions at sea will serve to formulate policy guidelines to address the ghost net issue in the Baltic.



Photo: Sebastian Kochus



Photographer William Hemberg took this photo of a ringed seal caught in ghost net off the coast of Sweden.

Photo: William Hemberg

WWF Germany commissioned an environmental impact assessment, carried out by the consultancy WSP Stockholm to assist in decisions on search and retrieval methodology. The study advised that lost fishing be removed from seafloor habitats due to the risk of

entanglement and of microplastic fibres infesting the marine food web. The study also raises the concern about sensitive habitats such as bladder wrack and blue mussel beds which should be searched by divers and not with dragging devices. Similarly, on highly endangered and sensitive eelgrass meadows, ghost net search and retrieval operations should only be carried out if necessary for the health of the ecosystem. The results of the assessment will be publicly available from March 2018.

WWF Germany has also engaged in an extensive testing campaign to find means of recycling fishing gear retrieved. The mechanical processing of ghost nets was tested including shredding, separation of sediments and lead sinkers from net fragments and fibre cleaning. The next step is the chemical analysis of the plastic fibres to show an indication whether these materials are safe to recycle into consumer products. Alternative pathways to material re-use are explored as well – methods such as pyrolysis and hydrolysis could be used to generate raw oil or synthetic gas from ghost nets.

## MARELITT Baltic Conference

**Kołobrzeg, 17–18 October:** WWF Poland organized an International Stakeholder's Conference on reducing the impact of derelict fishing gear on the Baltic Sea. The results of the first 1.5 years of the MARELITT Baltic Project were presented, and a study visit was made to the Baltic Net factory in Darłowo and the Kołobrzeg harbour. This was a unique opportunity to review progress and the future of the project.

Contact: [Marta Kalinowska](#)

Contacts: [Andrea Stolte](#)  
or [Marta Kalinowska](#)

# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES



Photo: Tallink Silja

## World's First Cruise Line with MSC Traceability Certification

Tallink Silja Line cruise ships are the first in their sector to certify according to the Marine Stewardship Councils (MSC) traceability standard. Every year some 22,000 kg of herring and 160,000 kg of shrimp are served on the boats. Certification means that Tallink Silja's travelers can choose fish with the blue MSC ecolabel, which shows that the fish comes from a viable stock and that fishing is conducted using sustainable methods. The ecolabelling will start with herring.

According to Tallink Silja the goal is to follow the principles of sustainable development and encourage customers to choose

fish from sustainable stocks which can be traced back to well-maintained, sustained MSC-certified fishing through every step in the supply chain, boosting the company's sustainability work.

"The global state of fish stocks is very worrying. WWF therefore recommends that stores and restaurants choose MSC-labeled options for imported fish. The fact that Tallink Silja is now at the forefront of shipping and cruising in terms of sustainable fish products is pleasing news," says Matti Ovaska, conservation expert at WWF Finland.

Contact: [Matti Ovaska](#)



## First MSC Certification for Baltic Sprat Fishery

The first Baltic Sea sprat fishery achieved approval for certification by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) in May. The certification of the Latvian Fishermen's Producers Organization (LFPO) sprat fishery can be applauded for meeting the rigorous MSC standards.

Sprat is one of several stocks included in a multiannual management plan for the Baltic Sea that was adopted in 2016. Stock status is currently good. There is little bycatch, and the fishery is well managed with respect to control and enforcement. The catch is landed in Latvia and processed in brine and oil for human consumption. Most products are exported to other European countries with 15 percent supplying the domestic market.

It is hoped that the outcome of the assessment process will inspire other countries and fleets targeting the same stock to undergo assessment. The Finnish sprat fishery has an assessment under way, with other countries perhaps to follow.

Contact:  
[Elīna Kolāte](#) or [Ottília Thoreson](#)

# BIODIVERSITY AND FISHERIES

## “Mating Belongs to All”

Finnish trading sector giant K Group and WWF Finland have initiated a wide-ranging cooperation to conserve and increase endangered migratory fish populations. The cooperation carries the slogan “Mating belongs to all” (Kuteminen kuuluu kaikille). Together, K Group and WWF will map different parts of Finland to find obstacles in migratory pathways to spawning grounds. In cooperation with local landowners, local K retailers and volunteers will work to make the spawning grounds once again accessible for fish. A further aim is to generate raised awareness of and discussion around Finland’s endangered migratory fish populations.

Contact: [Matti Ovaska](#)



Photo: Petteri Hautamaa

## Conserving Wild Salmon in Russian Rivers



Photo: Gilbert Van Ryselvoortel / WWF-Canada

### Kingisepp, 26

**October:** Key stakeholders came together to discuss measures for improved conservation of the wild

Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) population in Russia’s Luga River. The meeting was arranged by Baltic Fund for Nature, a working group of ICPO Biologists for Nature Conservation and LLC Ecocentrum within the Barents-Baltic Nature and People Programme (BBNP) project funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The meeting was endorsed by the municipality of Kingisepp.

A wide array of stakeholders participated. This included researchers from St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg’s Zoological Institute and the State Research Institute of Lake and River Fisheries, as well as experts from the Narvskiy Fish Hatchery and the North-West Territorial Administration of the



Federal Agency for Fisheries. Socially active local residents and representatives from the outdoor tourism industry also joined.

The main goal was to discuss implementation of earlier plans for the protection of the Luga River Atlantic salmon and encourage wider public involvement. An agreement was reached to launch an awareness campaign; address the status of salmon populations in the region’s rivers; establish closer ties between rangers, anglers and fishers; and volunteer actions to clean up the Luga riverbanks and Kingisepp rapids from accumulated domestic garbage.

Contact: [Evgeny Genelt-Yanovskiy](#)

# EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE



Photo: Egojūlis Povilaitis

## Awarding Baltic Sea Friendly Farming Practices

Agricultural activities are a major source of nitrogen and phosphorus inputs to the sea. Farmers are often criticized for their role in the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea. The agricultural sector has the potential to drastically reduce its negative impact by taking steps towards more sustainable practices.

To highlight concrete examples of the good initiatives under way on farms around the Baltic Sea, and to inspire more farmers and agricultural decision makers, WWF introduced an award for 'Baltic friendly farmers' in 2009.

WWF invites farmers to apply to the 2018 competition starting in January. Individual farmers, family farms and farm enterprises all qualify, both conventional and organic.

In each country around the Baltic Sea, one national winner will be

selected and presented with a certificate and a monetary award of €1,000. An international jury will select a regional winner from the set of national competition winners to be the 2018 Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year.

The regional winner will receive

a certificate and a monetary award of €10,000.

See [panda.org/baltic\\_farmer](http://panda.org/baltic_farmer) for award criteria and more information.

***The application period ends 31 March 2018.***

## Farmer of the Year in Lithuania

**Bukta, 8 September:** The 2018 competition for Baltic Sea Farmer of the Year Award was announced in Lithuania during the beef farmers' annual fair. There it was possible to meet some of the previous Lithuanian winners of the Award, and to learn more about the winners through a photo exhibition.

Most of Lithuania's previous national winners have been involved in animal husbandry, growing beef or sheep as their main farming activity. Animal husbandry can help to maintain high nature value grasslands, supporting habitats and red listed species. The production of beef cattle has risen in recent years, while dairy is on the decline. Although beef farming in Lithuania is more nature-friendly than dairy production there remains a need for stronger cooperation to guide the farmers on a continued path to sustainability, and to avoid the intensification of farming.

Contact: Nerijus Zableckis

# EUTROPHICATION AND AGRICULTURE

## An open letter from the speakers and participants of the conference "CAP 2020. Towards sustainable agriculture"

4th of September, 2017

**Addressees:** Agriculture and Fisheries Council of the European Union  
Agriculture and Rural Development Committee of the European Parliament  
European Commission

A conference dedicated to the future of European agriculture "CAP 2020. Towards sustainable agriculture" was held in Estonia on 1st and 2nd of September. The undersigned speakers and participants of the conference are hereby addressing the following message to the informal meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, that takes place in Tallinn from 3rd to 5th of September, and to the other decision-making bodies of EU.

It is impossible to overemphasise the importance of European agriculture – it is feeding all of us. It is however also impossible to deny the environmental footprint of agriculture, from pesticide residues in environment and food to excess nitrate in drinking water and overgrowing water-bodies – including the dead bottoms and algal blooms affecting Baltic Sea. If we proceed in the same way it will neither be possible to achieve the

“impossible to deny the environmental footprint of agriculture, from pesticide residues in environment and food to excess nitrate in drinking water and overgrowing water-bodies – including the dead bottoms and algal blooms affecting Baltic Sea. If business proceeds ‘as usual’, environmental commitments and public health are at risk, and the sector will be ignoring its role in conserving European biodiversity”.

The letter presents a specific critique of the CAP on several fronts and provides recommendations for “a thorough change” toward “a policy that is fair to farmers and all rural dwellers, is environmentally sustainable, promotes the production of healthy food and is globally responsible”.

The letter also provides a clear push for changes that will enable agriculture to become one of the solutions to our 21st century challenges. Read more about the conference and the CAP in the [ELF blog](#).

Contact: [Aleksei Lotman](#)

## An Open Letter to the EU on More Sustainable Agricultural Policy

**Tallinn and Matsalu, 1–2 September:** Environmental and agricultural organizations, farmers, scientists, officials and other participants attended a conference to discuss the future of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in conjunction to the Estonian Presidency of EU. The conference was also well covered by national media. Speakers from a

wide diversity of backgrounds united in the conclusion that the CAP requires significant changes. A majority of participants signed an [open letter](#) addressed to the EU Agriculture and Fisheries Council and other relevant EU decision-makers with proposals on how to repair the policy.

The letter states that it is



Photo: Natalia Yushchenkova

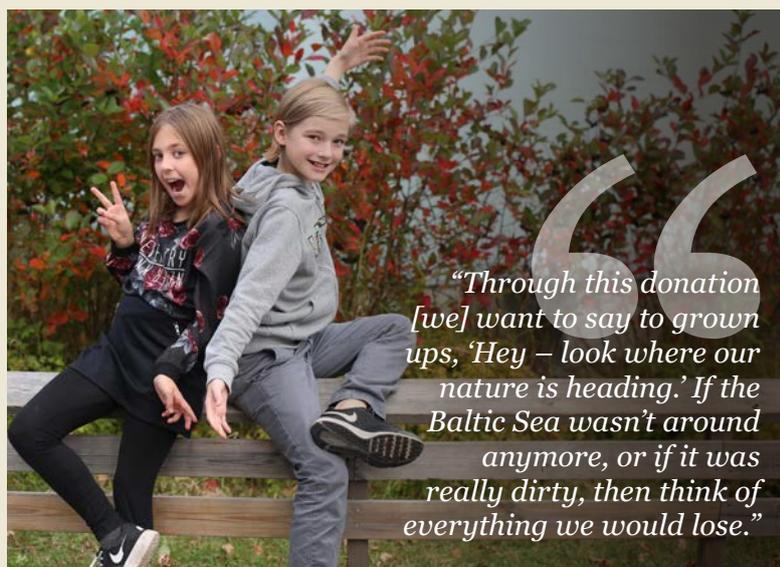
## Russian Baltic Farmer Brunch Event

**St. Petersburg, 2 September:** The best way to promote the WWF Baltic Farmer of the Year competition is to taste products grown on the farms of the winners from previous years! Under the lead of Chef Matteo Guida, his team at the Four Seasons Lion Palace Hotel presented a very special tasting menu to the participants of the informal Baltic Brunch meeting. The meeting brought together representatives of various organizations and projects working in sustainable development, including Ms. Maarika Saarn-Siimann, Acting Consul General of the Consulate General of Estonia in St. Petersburg.

The same weekend, Baltic Fund for Nature arranged a second event to promote the Baltic Farmer of the Year Award at Pavlovsk Royal Park, where park visitors had the opportunity to try products grown on the nature-friendly farms of competition winners.

Contact: [Evgeny Genelt-Yanovskiy](#)

# PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



“Through this donation [we] want to say to grown ups, ‘Hey – look where our nature is heading.’ If the Baltic Sea wasn’t around anymore, or if it was really dirty, then think of everything we would lose.”

Photo: Katrin Nousiainen / WWF-Finland

## Children Donate €12,000 to Save the Baltic Sea

When ten-year old Juhi Juntura and Lia Sinijärvi entered Finland’s version of the game show ‘Who wants to be a millionaire?’ few would have expected them to win, let alone to donate the majority of their winnings to a good cause. Yet this is exactly what happened. Dreaming of a healthier Baltic Sea, Juhi and Lia donated €12,000 to WWF and John Nurminen Foundation.

The children’s message: “Through this donation [we] want to say to grown ups, ‘Hey – look where our nature is heading.’ If the Baltic Sea wasn’t around anymore, or if it was really dirty, then think of everything we would lose. We couldn’t swim or go boating. The views from summer cottage would be horrible too.”

Contact: [Joonas Fritze](#)

## Finnish Store Phases Out Free Bags

In September, Finnish department store Stockmann donated five cents to WWF Finland for each plastic or paper bag a customer did not buy from the cashier. Stockmann also started charging for previously free shopping bags and donated another five cents for each reusable bag sold. With the aim of reducing the amount of plastic waste through encouraging its customers to use reusable bags, a total of €20,000 was collected for conservation of the Baltic Sea.

Plastic bags are made of at least 80 percent recycled material. FSC-certified wood is used in paper bags.

The change is part of the social commitment to sustainable development Stockmann made in October 2016. This commitment is underpinned by the objective of the EU Packaging Waste Directive to reduce the consumption of plastic carrier bags and the pollution of the seas.

Contact: [Maiju Sirviö](#)



Photo: Jürgen Freund / WWF



Photo: Siim Valtus

## Conservation Holidays in Estonia

Over 500 volunteers took part in ‘conservation holidays’ all around Estonia to help endangered species – such as the black stork, the dunlin and the natterjack – and to maintain semi-natural habitats where these and the wider web of life can thrive. The concept of the ‘conservation holiday’ (*talgud*) created by the Estonian Fund for Nature consists of volunteers participating in conservation work, getting to know the area, taking a hike and meeting the local ranger or guide. Such breaks normally last 3–5 days. The annual biodiversity theme for the volunteer programme was forest in 2017 and next year’s theme will be bumblebees. Contact: [Siim Kuresoo](#)

# PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Photo: Wojciech Czuchryja / WWF Poland

## Oil and Wildlife Don't Mix

**Gdańsk, 30 October:** Over 100 people attended a workshop on Oiled Wildlife Response, including WWF Blue Patrol volunteers from the Pomeranian Voivodeship. The workshop was organized by WWF with the support of Ministry of the Environment. Representatives of the General Directorate for Environmental Protection, the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection, veterinarians, and Maritime Search and Rescue Service were at the guest list.

The meeting included theory, followed by practical workshops on the methods of cleaning, drying and handling of oiled birds. Next year a similar workshop will be organized to help ensure volunteers are prepared for this unwanted scenario.

Contact: [Maria Jujka-Radziejewicz](#)



Photo: Michal Krause / WWF Poland

## Education on the Polish Baltic coast

Educational activities on marine issues were organized by WWF Poland in August along the Polish Baltic coast. Events took place in Darłowo, Gdańsk, Łeba, Mrzeżyno and Stegna in cooperation with the Blue Patrol (a group of volunteers recruited from local communities involved in rescue work led by WWF Poland). Through an exhibition and a range of activities, 700 participants learned about the array of problems facing the Baltic, from eutrophication and dead zones to the need for greater protection for marine mammals and birds.

Contact: [Rafał Jankowski](#) or [Anna Sosnowska](#)

## Mobilizing the Latvian Diaspora for Nature

In July, Pasaulas Dabas Fonds (PDF) reached out to Latvians living in other European countries to encourage them to take an active role in shaping the sustainable development of their native country. The venue for this outreach was an annual congress, [Eiropas Latviešu kongress](#), targeting Latvian expatriates.

Typically focused on issues around media, politics, education

and culture, this was the first time in the history of the congress that a workshop was held on nature and the environment. PDF led the discussion around real problems in environmental protection. The audience learned about issues of biodiversity and governance, as well as the role of nature in Latvia's international image and the Baltic Sea.

Out of these discussions emerged commitments on both sides. The

Latvian community living abroad pledged to actively request more sustainable policies by decision makers through sending regular letters with their questions, suggestions and objections regarding nature and environment. In turn, PDF will facilitate their efforts with sharing of the actual problems to help shape opinions and advocacy.

Contact: [Elīna Kolāte](#)

# PEARLS FROM THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Photo: Kelly Lawack / Shutterstock

## Ocean Outreach

Wonder, surprise, sorrow and inspiration – these are some of the emotions targeted by WWF Sweden's 2017 ocean campaign "Rädda haven". The campaign focused on the threats and the victories, needs and solutions in the oceans that provide us with essential ecosystem services and are the source of every second breath we take.

A campaign highlight was the film on Baltic guillemot seabirds, an indicator species for the state of the wider ecosystem. The footage emphasizes the value of safeguarding our marine environment by decision-makers such as Karolina Skog, Swedish Minister of Environment. Ms Skog's enthusiasm shines through as she personally tags some guillemots on their first journey from their nests, an exodus that occurs at midsummer every year.

To get inside the life of marine creatures, the campaign also developed a series of podcasts with humorous stories, featuring themes such as relationships, parenthood, sex and food habits. This podcast, as well as WWF Sweden's award-winning podcasts from the 2016 campaign, can be found [here](#) (in Swedish).

For more on the campaign site please check: <http://www.wwf.se/raddahaven/>

Contact: [Metta Wiese](#)



## News from Brussels

**Malta, 5–6 October:** "Our Oceans", the fourth in a series of conferences of global leaders on ocean conservation, featured major commitments from governments, businesses and civil society in response to the steep deterioration of ocean ecosystems. Commitments include increases in the extent of marine protected areas, fisheries reforms, carbon reduction and pollution controls, among others.

The conference provided an extraordinary opportunity for WWF to show leadership in global ocean governance and conservation. WWF had a strong delegation that included colleagues from Brussels, France, Greece, the Mediterranean Programme, Norway, the UK, the US and the Ocean Practice team. WWF co-hosted an opening side event with a focus on illegal fishing as well as a debate on the recently launched report "[Reviving the Economy of the Mediterranean Sea](#)". Over 100 people, including ministers and business representatives, attended the events.

European Commissioner for Environment and Maritime Affairs, Karmenu Vella, thanked WWF for its work on illegal fishing and its leadership role to develop the Sustainable Blue Economy agenda. The work, however, does not stop when the conference is over. Our role becomes even more important now to ensure the commitments bear fruit on the water improving ocean governance and conservation.

Contact: [Sam Burgess](#)



# ON THE HORIZON

## WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## 2017

• 12-13 December

HELCOM – 53rd Meeting  
of the Heads of Delegation  
Helsinki

## 2018

• 5 March

HELCOM 39th Commission  
Meeting  
Brussels

• 6 March

HELCOM – Ministerial Meeting  
Brussels

• 8-9 March

Baltic Sea Future Congress  
Stockholm

• 22-23 March

XVIII International  
Environmental Forum  
«BALTIC SEA DAY»  
St. Petersburg

• 4-5 June

9th Annual Forum  
of the EU Strategy for the  
Baltic Sea Region  
Tallinn

### Together for the Sustainable Conservation of the Western Indian Ocean

**Maputo, 20-23 November:** A big step was taken as governments from Comoros, France, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania gathered to develop a roadmap for collective sustainable management of the Western Indian Ocean, with a focus on the Northern Mozambique Channel.

Civil society representatives joined the governments and business representative to plan for how to value, protect, manage and enhance the natural ocean assets that are central to their economies, cultures and livelihoods. According to a report launched by WWF earlier this year, the natural resources of the Western Indian Ocean are valued at around US\$333.8 billion – so well worth taking care of!

Establishing fisheries management plans for key shared fish stocks such as tuna, promoting improved governance through delineating and planning maritime spaces, and tackling the risks posed by pollution and climate change form the basis of a joint action plan developed during the meeting. Discussions were held around a set of Regional Voluntary Commitments that the countries made in May 2017, toward delivery of UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 to «conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development» by 2030.

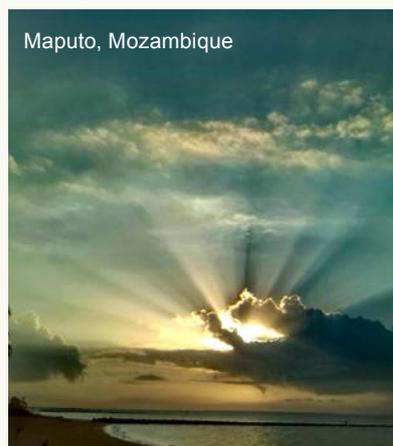


Photo: Stan Owen

Among the new initiatives emerging from this meeting is an award for “resilient coastal cities or islands” to engage cities and small islands to take substantive action against climate change. With growing tourism to the region, those cities and islands competing would be able to showcase and market their sustainability initiatives, and contribute to improving the livelihoods of local communities.

Connections between the Baltic and the Western Indian Ocean are many and active. Generous support from the Swedish Agency for International Development and Cooperation (Sida) makes much of the work possible, while the Baltic Ecoregion Programme partnership approach and scenarios process have provided useful examples for replication and adaptation.



#### Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[www.panda.org/baltic](http://www.panda.org/baltic)

#### SHARE YOUR NEWS!

Send us your contributions to the next issue of the Baltic Ecoregion News!

Ottilia and Anu