WWF

for a living planet®

A place like no other

THE BALTIC SEA

”A sea in which both the full diversity of life and the richness and well being of human cultures are secured for future generations.

A region where people thrive in harmony with nature, where flourishing economies rime with abundant wildlife and a clean sea.”

This is the vision of the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

The Baltic Sea is an extraordinary place and, is indeed, a place like no other.

It is one of the youngest seas on our planet, emerging from the last ice age just 10 000 –15 000 years ago. Its dynamic transformations – from a huge marine bay to a large freshwater lake to its present condition as the largest brackish water ecosystem in the world – have solidified its distinction as one of the most variable places on earth. Home to a diverse and stunning array of species including marine mammals, such as the Baltic ringed seals and harbour porpoise, migratory bird species, such as the artic tern, divers and long-tailed duck, fish species such as cod, herring and wild salmon as well as around 90 million people from its nine coastal countries, the Baltic Sea is indeed one of the world’s most unique and valuable places.

Where else in the world can you find freshwater species brought from the over 200 rivers empting into the Baltic Sea and saltwater species brought from the Atlantic Ocean? Where else can you swim and sail in the summer in the same waters which, just a few months prior, provided a frozen and busy byway for cars? Where else can you find the midnight sun, white nights and the feasts of midsummer – contrasted by the short, dark days of winter? And, where else can you find tens of millions of migratory birds flying above and stopping over this wondrous sea twice a year?

Yes, the Baltic Sea is truly a unique place …

… which, unfortunately, is uniquely threatened as well.

The Baltic Sea's unique distinctions – that it is brackish, shallow and cold – make it particularly sensitive. Its only connection to the Atlantic Ocean is through the narrow Danish Straits, which limits the exchange of water between these two bodies of water. As a result, the pollutants and organic matter entering the Baltic Sea can remain there for a long time – in fact the average exchange of water in the Baltic Sea can take up to 30 years.

WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME

Today, the Baltic Sea is one of the world's most threatened marine ecosystems. WWF and partner organisations in the nine coastal countries bordering the Baltic Sea are working together to address the biggest threats facing this region. If we, the population around the Baltic Sea, can solve our environmental problems, we can provide hope and sustainable examples to the rest of the world. It is in this spirit that the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme operates. We hope you will join us.

The key focal areas of our work include …

Shipping

Did you know that the Baltic Sea is one of the oldest trading routes in the world?

Today it represents a strategic route for oil exports from Russia and the Baltic States and is one of the busiest shipping routes in the world – representing over 15 per cent of the world's maritime transports. The amount of oil transported on the Baltic has more than doubled since 1997 and is expected to increase to at least 190 million tons by 2010. A large number of islands, narrow straits and long periods of ice cover greatly increase the risk of a devastating oil accident in the Baltic Sea.

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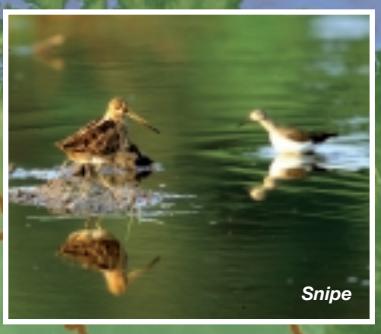
The WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme is working to ensure that all maritime transports in the Baltic Sea will be ecologically sustainable with a minimised impact on the marine environment by 2015.

Fisheries

Did you know that the Baltic Sea used to have one of the world's most productive fisheries?

Overfishing, damaging fishing practices, by-catch, and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing (IUU) are the primary threats facing Baltic fish stocks. These threats undermine the sustainable exploitation of this valuable resource as well as the livelihoods of fishermen around the region.

The WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme is working with governments, consumers and the fishing industry to promote ecosystem-based management of Baltic fisheries, eliminate IUU, establish no take zones and support economically viable fisheries through legislative and market incentives. Through this work, WWF aims to secure sustainable management and exploitation of Baltic Sea stocks of cod, herring, sprat, salmon and flatfish by 2015.



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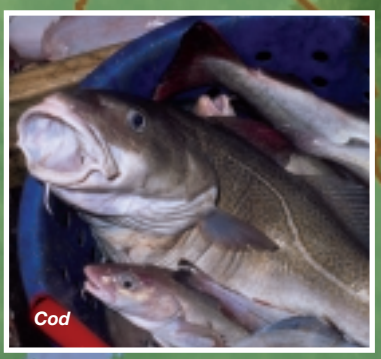

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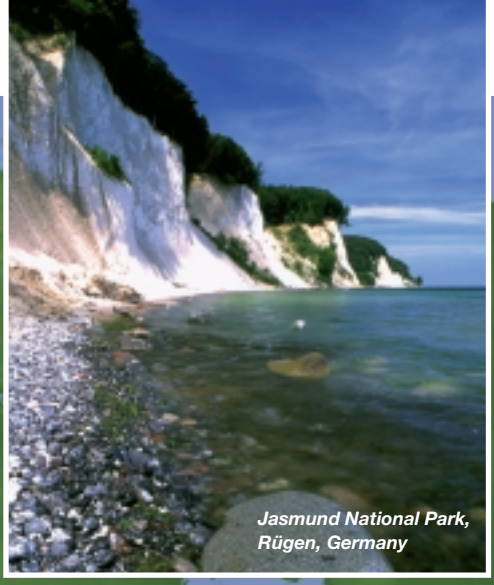

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Marine and Coastal Protected Areas

Did you know that just 0.6 per cent of the global marine environment is protected compared to 13 per cent of the land area?

WWF is working to protect and conserve the Baltic Sea's unique marine environment, its valuable species as well as preserve its fantastic potential for recreation and tourism for the future. Through this work, WWF aims to ensure that a network of ecologically representative and valuable marine and coastal protected areas covering at least ten percent of the Baltic Sea is established and well managed by 2010.

FINLAND

RUSSIA

ESTONIA

LATVIA

LITHUANIA

RUSSIA

POLAND

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Eutrophication

Did you know that Eutrophication is one of the most severe and widespread environmental threats facing the Baltic Sea?

Eutrophication – which is the overload of nutrients in aquatic systems – leads to increased production of algae. It can also lead to large-scale toxic algae blooms, altered food web structures and oxygen deficiency, or dead zones, over large areas. Two main nutrients cause eutrophication, nitrogen and phosphorus, and about 80 per cent of all nutrients in the sea come from land-based activities. Agriculture contributes the majority of the nutrient inputs.

The WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme works to decrease the amount of nutrients entering the Baltic by promoting best practices for sustainable agriculture, the reduction of harmful EU subsidies and the restoration of wetlands. Through this work, WWF aims to ensure that eutrophication does not threaten biodiversity and the ecological functions in the Baltic Sea by 2020.

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Baltic Ringed Seals, Grey Seals, and Harbour Seals all call the Baltic Sea home and are among the biggest of all the animals found in the Baltic.

Other challenges and solutions

The WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme aims to reduce the release of hazardous substances to the Baltic marine environment and raise awareness of the threats posed by the impacts of toxics. We also aim to ensure that all fish from the Baltic are safe for human consumption.

The Programme also supports climate change mitigation strategies and is assessing appropriate adaptation strategies to improve the resistance and resilience of the Baltic Sea's unique species and ecosystems to the threats of climate change.

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WWF engages future generations in our work

WWF, together with other organisations, launched Naturewatch Baltic – an education programme designed to build the capacity among teachers, school children and students to actively participate in nature conservation and sustainable development. Every year 20 000 students take part in Naturewatch Baltic. Within the new initiative, Education for Change, organisations and universities will test innovative models for teacher training for learning for sustainability in the Baltic region.

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THE WWF BALTIC ECOREGION PROGRAMME – WORKING TOGETHER FOR A LIVING BALTIC SEA

Drawing upon the extensive experience of its partners around the region, its network of experts actively engaged in policy fora, and its engagement with stakeholders from all levels of government, industry and civil society, the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme is uniquely positioned to realize innovative solutions to the problems facing the Baltic Sea Region.

Located in one of the world's most economically dynamic regions with a long tradition of environmental stewardship, the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme is an ambitious, broad scale, integrated approach that aims to conserve and, where necessary, restore the full range of biodiversity of the Baltic Sea.

It is grounded in science and blended with innovative strategies and bold ambition. Its focus encompasses the whole drainage area of the Baltic Sea and promotes integrated land, coastal and marine management to strengthen the local and regional capacity to achieve sustainable management of the Baltic Sea resources.

Sustainable management will improve ecosystem health and biodiversity while providing long-term social and economic benefits to farming, coastal and fishing communities, ecotourism and all industry sectors around the Baltic Sea.

The following organisations are lead partners within the Baltic Ecoregion Programme: Baltic Fund for Nature (Russia – www.bfn.org.ru), Estonian Fund for Nature (www.elfond.ee), Lithuanian Fund for Nature (www.glis.lt), Pasaules Dabas Fonds (Latvia – www.pdf.lv), WWF-Denmark (www.wwf.dk), WWF-Finland (www.wwf.fi), WWF-Germany (www.wwf.de), WWF-Poland Programme Office (www.wwf.pl), WWF-Russia (www.wwf.ru), and WWF-Sweden (www.wwf.se).

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WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organisations, with almost 5 million members and supporters and a global network active in some 100 countries.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

– conserving the world's biological diversity

– ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable

– promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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Please contact us for more information!

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