

Feldhamsterland – Current status of the large scale project and insight on the public relation and press relation work for hamster conservation in the project

The species conservation project Feldhamsterland started 2018 and is carried out in five federal states of Germany, namely Hesse, Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt, Rhineland-Palatinate and Lower Saxony. In Thuringia the project is conducted by the Landschaftspflegeverband Mittelthüringen e.V., in Hesse the AG Feldhamsterschutz (HGON e.V.) is responsible. Rhineland-Palatinate is served by the Stiftung Natur und Umwelt Rheinland-Pfalz. The Deutsche Wildtier Stiftung (German Wildlife Foundation) coordinates the overall project and is responsible for Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony.

The main pillars of the project are monitoring of the Common Hamster, conducting protection measures in cooperation with farmers and spreading awareness for the alarming situation of the Common Hamster in the public.

With the support of over 300 volunteers we so far were able to map an area of more than 5000 hectares. Those volunteers help create better data and with their knowledge then also become important multipliers. In areas with extant populations of the common hamster, we cooperate with farmers to conduct protection measures such as sparing areas from harvest, leaving high stubbles after the harvest or cultivating lucerne. Our regional coordinators advice farmers on how to integrate hamster conservation measures in their agricultural operation. To this state we implemented such protection measures on over 400 hectares. To this one could add more than 100 Agri-environment measures, which directly or indirectly resulted out of the consultation by our experts in the five project regions.

On the long term, we have to adapt the Regional Rural Development Programmes (RDP) of the federal states, in order to supplement effective protection measures for the Common Hamster. Thus, we need to tailor existing Agri-environment measures and create new ones, which produce a benefit for the Common Hamster and at the same time are feasible and attractive for the farmers. Through the Citizen Science approach of the project, we hope to build a powerful network of passionate „Common Hamster Embassadors“, who campaign for the fate of the common hamster.

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