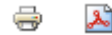


A LIFEline for Europe's threatened invertebrates



Invertebrates are vital for pest control, pollination, soil creation and water filtration. But these species are rapidly declining across Europe due to loss of natural habitats, agricultural intensification, pollution, invasive alien species and climate change. LIFE projects have been working hard to reverse this trend. Below is a selection.

The plight of invertebrates has been recognised by the [EU Pollinators Initiative](#), which was set up in 2018 to address the reasons behind the decline in wild pollinators and to take urgent action. Also, one of the main goals of the [EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030](#) is to conserve and enhance wild invertebrate pollinators.

Helping an endangered butterfly move freely

The Violet copper butterfly is extremely rare and is only found in a few European regions. In the Eifel national park in Germany, there are some populations left but they are often isolated, meaning they cannot move between habitats.

The [LIFE Patches and Corridors](#) team is preserving existing and introducing new habitats like wetlands, alluvial forests and flower meadows for the butterfly. They are also helping local populations move back and forth between habitats by introducing stepping stones (patches of land) and ecological corridors between protected areas.



Overcoming threats to three beetles

Beetles are crucial decomposers, especially in forests. They also reduce pests and are an important measure of biodiversity.

But the Ground beetle, the Laurocho and the Ironclade beetle are threatened in Portugal's Azores islands due to factors like land-use changes and invasive alien species.

The project team behind [LIFE BEETLES](#) has set out to enhance the three beetles' populations, their distribution area and their conservation status.

Actions include improving the habitats by reviving Eucalyptus forests, rewilding existing pastures, planting shrubs and controlling invasive alien species. The team is also carrying out awareness-raising activities to change the often-negative public perceptions of beetles.



Tarphius floresensis Borges & Serrano, 2017

Bringing a river mussel back from the brink

Until recently, the Thick shelled river mussel was thought to be extinct in Denmark. But it was rediscovered in the Odense river in 2004 and the Suså river in 2007. Despite this good news, the river still posed some problems for the mussels. For example, the Common minnow and the European bullhead fish, that the mussels depend on, were no longer present.

The [UC LIFE Denmark](#) project team have to-date bred and released a lot of Common minnow into both rivers. These fish serve as a host fish for the mussels' larvae. They have also introduced several European bullheads from neighbouring Skåne in southern Sweden. And they have removed a dam in a river near Odense, helping fish to navigate more easily.



Minding the gap in oak habitats

Poor maintenance and management have had a devastating impact on Fennoscandian wooded pastures and meadows. Some sites have been completely abandoned and have become fragmented, resulting in various species of beetle disappearing altogether.

The [LIFE Bridging the Gap \(BTG\)](#) project team's main goal is to rebuild and reconnect this fragmented landscape. This will help the local Hermit beetle, the Great Capricorn beetle and the Stag beetle - that all depend on wood – to thrive.

The team is restoring around 1 405 hectares of wood pasture, an area twice the size as Gibraltar. They are also introducing grazing animals and planting oak trees and bushes. This work will increase the area of oak habitats and reduce the distance between the oak sites. Other actions include building 185 Stag beetle habitat piles in warm areas, helping females to lay their eggs on the decaying logs.



Saving multiple insect species from extinction

In the Western Carpathian Mountains, there was a marked shift from small-scale traditional farming to more intensive agriculture in the second half of the 20th century. This caused the decline of various plant and animal species, including insects.

The [LIFE for insects](#) project team is reviving insect numbers through habitats restoration. It is also better connecting isolated populations.

Target species include the Stag beetle, the Clouded Apollo, the Large blue, and the Jersey tiger.

The team expects to restore around 510 hectares of habitats in both Czechia and the Slovak Republic side of the mountains. This area is around three times as big as Monaco. Work includes removing shrubs, mowing and grazing, and encouraging small-scale farming by working with farmers and other landowners.

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