



Nature Protection Department

[Latviski](#) [English](#)

Law on the Protection of Species and Habitats

Chapter I. General provisions

Article 1. (Definitions used in the Law)

Following definitions are used in the law:

- 1. Habitats** - terrestrial or aquatic areas distinguished by geographic, abiotic and biotic features, whether entirely natural or semi-natural;
- 2. Habitat of a species** - an environment defined by the set of specific abiotic and biotic factors, in which the species exists at any stage of its biological cycle;
- 3. Micro Reserve** – a territory that is determined in order to ensure protection of Specially Protected Species or Habitats outside Specially Protected Nature Territories, as well as within the Specially Protected Nature Territories, if protection is not ensured by any of the functional zones;
- 4. Population** - a group of individuals of one species inhabiting a certain area or habitat type;
- 5. Species** - wild species of animals, birds, plants, fungi and lichen (also subspecies) in their scientific meaning;
- 6. Introduction of species** – introduction of wild species that are alien to Latvia;
- 7. Re-introduction of species** – restoration of previously extinct population of species.

Article 2. Purpose of the Law

The purposes of the Law are:

1. to contribute towards ensuring bio-diversity through the conservation of habitats and of wild fauna and flora characteristic of Latvia;
2. to regulate protection, management and monitoring of wild species and habitats;
3. to facilitate the conservation of populations and habitats according to the economic and social conditions, as well as to cultural traditions;
4. to regulate designation of the Specially Protected Species and Habitats.

Article 3. Scope of the Law

The Law regulates subjects that are related to:

1. plant, fungi and lichen species, habitats of species, individuals of species in all stages of their development, as well as their recognisable parts;
2. species of animals, habitats of species, individuals of species in all stages of their development, eggs and perennial nests, as well as dead individuals and their parts;
3. Specially Protected Habitats.

Chapter II.

State administration of the protection of species and habitats

Article 4. Competence of the Cabinet of Ministers

The Cabinet of Ministers determines:

1. the lists of Specially Protected Species and species whose exploitation is limited;
2. the lists of Specially Protected Habitats;
3. recompense of damages for spoilage or destruction of individuals of Specially Protected Species and Habitats;
4. order of establishment of Micro Reserves and regulations on their management and protection;
5. issuing order of permits referred to in this law;
6. designation of the compensation for significant damage for land users caused by the specially protected non-hunttable and migrating animal species.

Article 5. The competence of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional development

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development in accordance with this law:

1. ensures the supervision of Specially Protected Species and Habitats;
2. takes requisite measures to maintain the population of the species at the conservation status which corresponds to the conditions of Latvia;
3. takes the requisite measures for conservation of all local species and habitats and whenever appropriate – restoration of habitat in order to assure maintenance of optimum area of the habitat;
4. determines preparation order of the Conservation Action Plans of Specially Protected Species and Habitats, and facilitates implementation of those plans;
5. may restrict, suspend or prohibit the use of species and habitats if it could endanger the existence of population and habitats;

6. issues permits determined in this law or annuls them if respective activities endanger the condition of local species and habitats;
7. prepares report which is accessible to the public regarding the allowed exceptions referred in the article 16 of this law and publishes it in "Latvijas Vēstnesis";
8. ensures monitoring of the Specially Protected Species and Habitats and carries out registration of cases of accidental capturing or killing of individuals of Specially Protected Species;
9. determines Micro Reserves except those of the forest land and except spawning places of Specially Protected Fish Species;
10. determines Micro Reserves in State Nature Reserves and National Parks.

Article 6. The competence of relevant state institutions

1. Ministry of Education and Science facilitates scientific research necessary for the implementation of this law;
2. State Forest Service determines Micro Reserves in the forest lands (except those situated in the territories referred in Article 5, 10) of this law) and carries out their supervision in accordance with legislation regulating forest management and exploitation;
3. State Fishery Board determines Micro Reserves in the spawning sites of Specially Protected Fish Species.

Chapter III

Protection requirements of species and habitats

Article 7. Favourable conservation status of species and habitats

1. Protection of species and habitats is a set of necessary measures for conservation or restoration of populations and habitats at the optimum level.
2. The goal of the protection of species is to ensure conditions that favour optimal distribution of the species population and the number of individuals in the populations. The protection of species is considered to be satisfactory when:
 1. population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its habitat;
 2. the natural range is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future;
 3. there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat area to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.
3. The goal of the protection of habitats is to ensure maintenance of factors that favourably influence the habitat and its characteristic species, and which determine natural distribution, structure and functions of the habitat, as well as the survival of its characteristic species on a long-term basis. The protection of habitat is considered to be satisfactory when:

1. geographical area, its distribution, range and occurrence are stable or are extending;
 2. it has characteristic structure and functions which are necessary for the long-term existence of the habitat and it is foreseeable that they will exist in the near future as well;
 3. the satisfactory protection of its characteristic species is ensured.
4. Protection priority in Specially Protected Nature Territories and in Micro Reserves is given to species or habitat for the protection of which the respective territory or Micro Reserve was created.

Article 8. Protection of Specially Protected Species, habitats and migrating bird species

1. Lists of Specially Protected Species and Habitats include endangered, disappearing, rare species and habitat types or species that inhabit specific habitats. Specially Protected Species and Habitats are under special state protection.
2. For the insurance of favourable conservation status for Specially Protected Species and Habitats in the habitats of species, Micro Reserves are determined in accordance with the order of establishment of Micro Reserves.
3. The Institution which is responsible for the designation of Micro Reserves informs land owners and permanent users about the decision of establishment of a Micro Reserve in accordance with management and protection provisions of Micro Reserves.
4. Provisions of this law can also be ascribed to migrating bird species that are not included in the lists of Specially Protected Species.

Article 9. Obligations of the landowners and permanent users of the land

Landowners and permanent users are obliged to:

1. facilitate maintenance of the diversity of species and habitats;
2. report to the respective Regional Environmental Board about changes and factors which degrade the condition of the Specially Protected Species and Habitats, and also report any violation of protection requirements;
3. not interfere with the study, monitoring and evaluation of the Specially Protected Species and Habitats;
4. ensure undisturbed resting and feeding conditions for the migrating animals, especially bird species, including those which are not included in the list of Specially Protected Species during migration season, introduce sustainable ecological methods in order to preclude damage being done by animals.

Article 10. The right of the landowners and permanent users of the land for compensation

Landowners and permanent users of the land have the right to receive compensation from the resources of the Environmental Protection Fund for the damage done by the individuals of Specially Protected non-hunttable and migrating Species.

Article 11. Prohibited actions with species of specially protected animals

including those of birds

Following activities are prohibited in respect to specially protected animals including those of bird species in all stages of their development:

1. all forms of deliberate capture or killing;
2. deliberate disturbance (particularly during periods of breeding, rearing, moulting, hibernation and migration) and deliberate destruction of their habitats;
3. deliberate destruction or taking of eggs from the wild;
4. deterioration or destruction of breeding sites;
5. keeping in capture, transportation, donation, selling or exchange, offering for sale or exchange.

Article 12. Prohibited actions with species of Specially Protected Plants, Fungi and Lichen

Following activities are prohibited in respect to species of Specially Protected Plants, Fungi and Lichen in all stages of their development:

1. picking, plucking, digging out or destruction of their habitats;
2. rearing, collection, transportation, donation, sale or exchange, as well as offering for sale or exchange of plants taken from the wild;

Article 13. Taking of individuals of the Specially Protected Species in the wild

While taking of individuals of the Specially Protected Species in the wild, satisfactory protection should be ensured and regulations of taking of individuals in the wild referred to in this law should be observed. The individuals of non-hunttable species are allowed to be taken only by means of a permit issued for each case.

Article 14. Taking or disturbance regulations of the individuals of Specially Protected Species

It is allowed to take or disturb individuals of the Specially Protected Species in exceptional cases if there is no acceptable alternative and if it does not harm the favourable protection of the respective population in their natural distribution range for the following purposes:

1. in the interest of protection of wild fauna and flora and conserving natural habitats;
2. in order to prevent serious damage on agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishery, hunting menage, and other kinds of land use, as well as water quality;
3. in the interest of public health and security;
4. for the purpose of scientific research and education (including the needs of museums).

Article 15. Limited exploitation of Specially Protected Species

In respect to the individuals of Specially Protected Species whose exploitation is limited, all rules determined in this law are applicable except those determining order of capture of individuals of Specially Protected Species in Article 13 and 14. It is allowed to capture the individuals of Specially Protected Species whose

exploitation is limited in accordance with provisions determined in the law if it does not harm the favourable conservation status of respective population of species in its natural range.

Article 16. Informing the public about the taking of individuals of Specially Protected Species in the wild

1. A report shall be prepared about the taking of individuals of Specially Protected Species in the wild at least bi-annually.
2. The report mentioned in the first part of this article must include:
 1. species which are subject to derogation and the reasons for these derogations;
 2. the assessment of the risk, as well as the reference in respect to offered and rejected alternatives, based upon scientific data;
 3. the means, devices or methods which are used for harming, capturing or killing of animals;
 4. place and time of adoption of the exception;
 5. the institution authorised to check and declare how the required conditions are obtained and to decide what means, devices or methods may be used, within what limits and by what agencies, and which persons should carry out the task;
 6. the supervisory measures used and the results obtained.

Article 17. Conservation Action Plans of species and habitats

If there is a need for special protection measures for certain species and habitats, protection is ensured in accordance with a Conservation Action Plan.

Conservation Action Plans of species and habitats are approved by the Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.

Chapter IV Introduction and re-introduction of population of species

Article 18. Regulations of the introduction of species

1. Introduction of alien species and release in the nature of Latvia is prohibited.
2. Introduction of species is admissible only for the purpose of satisfying urgent economic or social needs by means of a permit that is issued after the completion of the Environmental Impact Assessment.
3. The initiator of the introduction of a species carries out monitoring of the introduced population and research of the ecological effects. The results of monitoring and research are submitted to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development every two years.

Article 19. Provisions for the re-introduction of species

Re-introduction of population of species is allowed only for the purposes of conservation or restoration of species with a permit based on the statement of an expert of the respective scientific agency.

Article 20. Regulations of the re-introduction of species

Re-introduction of species is allowed:

1. if the structure of the donor population and its self-renovation ability is preserved;
2. if ecological suitability of the chosen territory (region) for the reintroduction is scientifically justified and the protection status for the reintroduced population is provided;
3. if the most ecologically and genetically related populations have been chosen for reintroduction;
4. if the initiator of the introduction carries out monitoring of the introduced population and researches the ecological effects of this introduction. The results of monitoring and research are submitted to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development at least every two years.

Chapter V Monitoring and evaluation

Article 21. Necessity for carrying out monitoring

In order to control protection of species and habitats, regular monitoring and other research is carried out to obtain:

1. lists of species that are in danger of extinction or particularly endangered species taking into account their natural distribution range;
2. lists that include sites and their ecological description of areas particularly important to migratory species on their migratory route and as wintering and nesting grounds;
3. data regarding the population levels of migratory species on their migratory routes and as wintering and nesting grounds;
4. data on the population level of migrating bird species as shown by ringing;
5. data regarding the effect of hunting on the population level of animals;
6. data regarding the introduction of sustainable ecological methods to minimise the damage done by animals;
7. data determining the role of certain species as indicators of pollution;
8. data regarding the adverse effect of pollution on population levels of plants and animals.

Article 22. Evaluation of numbers of incidentally captured or killed animals

Each person must inform the respective Regional Environmental Board about each incidentally captured or killed specially protected animal or bird. Taking into account obtained information, the respective Environmental Protection Board carries out further research and appropriate protection measures in order to decrease the possibility of further cases of incidental capturing and killing.

Article 23. Status of dead animal

1. Any dead animal, including bird, of Specially Protected Species is the property of the State and should be consigned to Nature Museum of Latvia. Stuffed animals

or stuffed birds could be only the components of the collections that belong to the State and can not be marketed or otherwise used for commercial purposes.

2. Stuffed animals or birds could be made for keeping only from huntable animals or fishes that have been obtained in the legal way.

Approved by Saeima 16 March, 2000

Riga 5 April, 2000

President

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