

Project

LIFE Osmo Baltic. The Path of Old Oaks for the Hermit Beetle in Lithuania and Latvia

LIFE22 NAT/LT/101113698 LIFE OSMO BALTIC

Activities in 2024

Public education and information

The Lithuanian Zoo has been contributing to the conservation of endangered animal species for many years and has successfully participated in projects aiming to increase their number in Lithuania. We encourage public involvement in preserving old trees, thus, organize various activities and events.

One of such events - the celebration of Earth Day on March 20, 2024, during which an open lecture and presentation of the new education “Endangered Animals and Possibilities for Their Conservation” were held. We once again drew attention to the one of priority species of the European Union Habitats Directive – the hermit beetle (*Osmoderma eremita*), which lives not only in the zoo, but also in the nearby Kaunas Oak Park.

The possibilities of conserving this beetle were also discussed in the LRT program “7 days of Kaunas”. The hosts of the program, together with Klaidas Mikėnas, animal care specialist at the Lithuanian Zoo, and Egidijus Praspaliauskas, senior coordinator of educational projects, reviewed the peculiarities of *Osmoderma eremita*’s life – “Waiting for the beetle wedding: a look at the small invertebrates kept at Lithuanian Zoo”.

In order to ensure the protection of the hermit beetle (*Osmoderma eremita*) species, the LIFE22 NAT/LT/101113698 LIFE OSMO BALTIC project was launched in 2024 – “LIFE Osmo Baltic. The Path of Old Oaks for the Hermit Beetle in Lithuania and Latvia”. This project is a continuation of the [LIFE Osmoderma](#) project implemented in 2017-2022. The goals of the new project will be achieved during 2024-2030. We will implement the reasonable results and the experience gained by creating a transboundary ecological network that will connect the populations of the hermit beetle species in Lithuania and Latvia.

LIFE22 NAT/LT/101113698 LIFE OSMO BALTIC project

The presentation conference of the new environmental project was held on June 4, 2024 at the National Visitor Center of the State Protected Areas Service, Vilnius. The main goal of the project - to monitor the hermit beetle (*Osmoderma barnabita*) species and conduct scientific research in order to expand existing or create new NATURA 2000 territories, connecting them into a single NATURA 2000 network, based on the requirements of the Habitats Directive. In other words, in order to preserve biodiversity, attention is paid to the protection of old trees in Lithuania and Latvia. As already emphasized in the event invitation, old deciduous trees perform particularly important functions: from a home and/or a source of food to participating in the process of stopping climate change.

The conference was opened by A. Klimavičius (Ministry of the Environment) and R. Lapinskiėnė (State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of the Environment). The idea, goals, planned activities and implementation methods of the LIFE project were presented by G. Leipė, G. Alvydas, D. Augutis (Lithuanian Fund for Nature). G. Švitra (State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of the Environment) highlighted why the “The hermit beetle (*Osmoderma barnabita*) - an indicator species”, A. Gintaras (Lithuanian Fund for Nature) shared the most commonly used “Tree care measures”. R. Źilinskas (Landscape and Greenery Expert Group) summarized the “Care of old trees and tree veterans”. As [LIFE Osmo Baltic Ambassador S. Paltanavičius](#) emphasized in his presentation: “We do not protect small or large, we protect those who need help”.

M. Balalaikins (Daugavpils University, Latvia) shared both results and experience in developing as well as using a “Smart Pheromone Trap for Research on the Hermit Beetle”. Other foreign scientists presented the results of implemented projects: N. Jansson (Ostergotland County, Sweden) from the “LIFE Bridging the Gap” project, and J. Hedin (Kalmar County Administration, Sweden) – “Endangered Insect Species in Old Oaks: Research and Good Practice”. K. Mikėnas (Lithuanian Zoo) shared the experience of the LIFE Osmoderma project implemented in 2017-2022 in the report “Breeding of the Hermit Beetle in the Lithuanian Zoo”.

All records of this conference can be viewed [here](#).

Internship in Romania September 29 – October 4, 2024

The partners of the project - the Lithuanian Fund for Nature, the Lithuanian Zoo, the Directorate of Dzūkija-Suvalkija Protected Areas, Directorate of Źemaitija National Park, the Latvian Roads Directorate, the Latgale Planning Region and the Nature Conservation Agency - went to learn from their colleagues in Romania, who are implementing the [LIFE Rosalia](#) project “Protection of saproxylic beetles in the Carpathians” in the territories of the Putna Vrancea Nature Park (Eastern Carpathians).



The goal of the Romanian project is closely related to the new environmental project LIFE22 NAT/LT/101113698 LIFE OSMO BALTIC - to ensure the survival of the population of dead wood-eating species and the protection of old trees. According to specialists from the [Directorate of Dzūkija-Suvalkija Protected Areas](#) and the [Directorate of Źemaitija National Park](#), responsible for the implementation of the environmental project LIFE OSMO BALTIC, it is worth to pay attention to the application of innovative methods in the LIFE Rosalia project. These methods help to reach remote project territories, create habitats in younger trees, and use pheromones to lure beetles to more favorable territories. K. Mikėnas, a breeding specialist from the Lithuanian Zoo, particularly drew attention to the peculiarities of the habitats used for insects protected in the LIFE Rosalia project (see photos).



Photo: K. Mikėnas (Lithuanian Zoo)



Photo: [Žemaitija National Park](#)



Photo: [Directorate of Dzūkijos–Suvalkijos Protected Areas](#)

Partners from Daugavpils University of Latvia visit

In September 2024, colleagues from Daugavpils University of Latvia visited the Lithuanian Zoo. The purpose of their visit - to get acquainted how the hermit beetle is bred, and to gain experience in this field.

Specialists of the Lithuanian Zoo, who are working on the second project aiming to conserve the hermit beetle population shared their experience. 200 larvae of hermit beetle, which were bred at the Lithuanian Zoo, were released into their natural habitats on May 31, 2024.

It is expected that the practical knowledge gained by colleagues from Latvia will significantly contribute to restoring the population of this endangered species in the oak forests of Latvia.

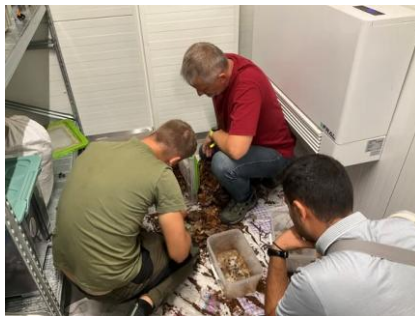


Photo: K. Mikėnas (Lithuanian Zoo)

Counting larvae of the hermit beetle in 2024

After releasing 200 larvae of hermit beetles into their natural habitats on May 2024, Lithuanian Zoo specialist K. Mikėnas inspected the breeding boxes in September. Based on the “[Methodology for Rearing and Breeding the Hermit Beetle \(*Osmoderma barnabita*\)](#)” developed during the LIFE Osmoderma project, each breeding box was checked for larvae. The selected larvae were inspected, counted, measured and weighed - a total of 889 were counted. The larvae were left in the breeding boxes to calmly prepare and form wintering “chambers” and cocoons. The next inspection and counting process will take place in the spring of 2025.

LIFE22 NAT/LT/101113698 LIFE OSMO BALTIC partners meeting

The project partners' meeting was on November 5-6, 2024. During this meeting, the work done was enjoyed and activities for 2025 were planned. According to the information of the Lithuanian Fund for Nature, in 2024: 2929 trees were inventoried in Lithuania; 1368 km long ecocorridor was formed; 78 pheromone traps were used during the mating season of the hermit beetle, thanks to which adult beetles were caught (and released there) in 15 locations; and 889 larvae of the hermit beetle were bred in the Lithuanian Zoo.

